

Panamanian tanker rescues 20 but 55 still missing

Story Below,
Col. 3

Leyte, Surigao landslide victims need your help

AN ANONYMOUS donor gave P1 million in answer to a call for aid for the landslide and flood victims of San Ricardo, San Francisco and other coastal towns in Southern Leyte, and Placer and other towns in Surigao del Norte and Surigao City.

The appeal for contributions was made by the Diocese of Maasin (South-Leyte/A6



Pinoy teen Denmark's new singing sensation

By Tessie Cruz-Larsen
Contributor

COPENHAGEN, Denmark—There's a new idol in the land of Hans Christian Andersen, and he's not a blond and blue-eyed prince from some fairy tale. That's PINOY/A5



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★★

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THE JOYS OF CHRISTMAS...

...don't just happen. Until there's sharing. The Public Relations Society of the Philippines goes on a gift-giving spree at the National Orthopedic Hospital. Among the recipients are bone cancer-stricken children, Jenjen Punzalan, Christian Poras, Eliseo Ramos, Nea Latag and Irene Latag.

EDWIN BACASMAS

No Christmas dinner for abandoned 'lola'

By Christian V. Esguerra

DINNER with one's children. What could be a simpler Christmas wish?

But for Alodia C. Meriz, 82, this Christmas will be like last year's, and the year before that. Her two children will remain in Isabela province, too poor to travel. And Lola Alodia will be stuck at the busy intersection of Edsa and Shaw Boulevard, where she has been begging for alms for at

least the last 400 days.

The last time Lola Alodia saw them was about two years ago, when her eldest Annalyn went to the province to settle down with her husband. Soon after, Annalyn sent for her brother Jerry to help her around the farm.

Annalyn vowed to send for her mother but the promise remains unfulfilled.

Lola Alodia turned 82 only last Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Ad-

NO CHRISTMAS/A6

Erap allowed to go to US

Hardest-hit village may be turned into a cemetery

US, Japan,
UN lead
int'l donors

By Jerome Aning

WHILE offering sympathy to the victims of landslides and floods in Southern Leyte and northeastern Mindanao, the United States and Japan yesterday said they were giving over P10 million in assistance to the disaster-stricken areas.

The United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs also provided an emergency grant of P2.8 million (\$50,000) and was "working to mobilize international donor response" after the catastrophe.

US Ambassador to Manila Francis Ricciardone, who accompanied President Macapagal-Arroyo in visiting Panaon Island on Tuesday, expressed "great regret and sympathy" on behalf of President George W. Bush. Floods

US, JAPAN/A6

By Jani Arnaiz
and Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

SAN FRANCISCO, Southern Leyte—Barangay Punta, the village hardest hit by last week's landslides, may be turned into a cemetery with the residents' refusal to return there.

San Francisco Vice Mayor Bonifacio Amarga Jr. said the members of the municipal council arrived at the decision during their session Monday. He said they were left with no choice because the residents of Punta, including Barangay Chair Ricky Subang, did not want to rebuild their homes and remember their horrible experience.

Subang himself has reportedly urged his constituents not to return to the village. (See related story below.)

San Francisco Mayor Diego Yuboc and some provincial officials were amenable to the plan to convert Punta into a cemetery.

Amarga said it looked like a "ghost barangay" at night. "It is so quiet at night that it sends chills [down] my spine," he said.

The retrieval operations in Punta were stopped on Monday night because of the stench.

HARDEST-HIT/A9



MOURNING becomes

electric for San Francisco, the hardest-hit village in Southern Leyte where President Macapagal (right) and Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Leria condole with the bereaved. The holiday mood took a back seat as the President flew on Tuesday to other areas affected by the landslides. (Above) Remains to be seen of lives rudely interrupted by the wrath of nature upon a treeless earth.



RYAL HANDUMON

'Punta is so remote that I often feel only typhoons know it exists'

The author is a former reporter of Business Day. Her children, who were vacationing on Panaon Island, survived the landslides that killed more than 100 of her relatives.—ED.

By Leticia M. Subang
Contributor

IT IS difficult to describe how much Punta, a village in the remote municipality of San Francisco on Panaon Island, Southern Leyte, means to my family.

I take my three children there regularly just so they will know the value of keeping one's family ties intact.

In 1976, we were there to honor my grandfather's only request—that no matter where we were at that time, we would gather togeth-

er in Punta on his 80th birthday.

In 1999, we were there to celebrate my parents' 50th wedding anniversary. And we started planning for my father's 80th birthday in November.

Punta, 1.5 kilometers away from the town center of San Francisco, is where we hold our clan's regular May reunions.

We wanted to have such reunions every two years, but with 2004 an election year, we decided to hold the next get-together in 2005. Relatives who had migrated to the cities and overseas have promised to start saving for the trip home.

But there is no more Punta to go home to. Most of the clan's elders are gone. As of the last account, only three of the elders, all

PUNTA/A9

Tanker rescues 20 but 55 still missing

By Jofelle P. Tesorio
Southern Luzon Bureau

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—A Panamanian tanker on Monday plucked from choppy waters 20 of the 75 passengers and crew members of a wooden-hulled ferry that sank a day earlier off

Palawan, while a Philippine reconnaissance plane on Tuesday spotted five others adrift in rough seas.

Navy and Coast Guard officials yesterday said search and rescue operations were continuing for the missing passengers and crew of the 69-ton ML Piary, which

sank at 1 p.m. Sunday while on its way to Brookes Point in Palawan.

The vessel left Mapun in Cagayan de Tawi-Tawi, a cluster of islets in the Sulu Sea, at 5:30 p.m. Saturday despite the inclement weather.

Cmdr. Geronimo Malabanan,

Navy spokesperson, said the MV Pacific Valor rescued the 20 survivors aboard a life raft at 8 p.m. Monday near Fearless Shoal, which lies between Balabac Island at the southern tip of Palawan and Malaysia's Banguay Island off the northern tip of Borneo.

TANKER/A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao including Palawan will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms becoming widespread rains over Southern Mindanao. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/12/24/03

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

Metro Manila Partly Cloudy
Baguio Partly Cloudy
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Roxas Widespread Rains
Cebu Cloudy with Rains
Tacloban Widespread Rains
Gen. Santos Widespread Rains
Zamboanga Widespread Rains
Cagayan de Oro Widespread Rains
Davao Widespread Rains

Leyte slides revive call for total log ban

By Michael Lim Ubac and Volt Contreras

ADMINISTRATION Sen. Francis Pangilinan has called for the immediate imposition of a total log ban in the wake of the deadly floods and landslides in Southern Leyte that claimed the lives of more than 200 people.

Pangilinan said the total log ban should cover all timber forests and should be imposed for a limited period of 10 years to allow the country's timber forests to recover from the deforestation and illegal logging that have been going on for decades.

Pangilinan's proposed measure immediately received support from Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. John Osmena.

"Government has the responsibility to create an environment where these accidents are minimized," said Pangilinan who intends to sponsor the measure when Congress resumes sessions on Jan. 12, 2004.

The senator said the government has the responsibility to create an environment that would minimize accidents such as the Panaon

island tragedy which has been blamed partly on deforestation.

The government is currently implementing a selective log ban policy.

Amid the continuing clamor for the environment department to answer for the Dec. 20 tragedy in Southern Leyte and northeastern Mindanao, Forest Management Bureau Director Romy Acosta yesterday insisted the massive flooding and landslides were not caused by illegal logging operations.

Belying allegations that big-time logging syndicates were behind the deforestation of Panaon island, Acosta said it was the conversion of former forested areas which he said belonged to "small private owners" into agricultural lands that caused the denudation.

He said forest materials gathered from the island mostly end up as construction materials for the island residents themselves.

Like Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun, Acosta blamed the tragedy on the unusually heavy rainfall that fell on Leyte over the weekend.

"It's like suddenly pouring a pail of water on a pile of gravel that used to be showered

using only sprinklers," he said in Filipino, describing the abnormally wet weather.

Gozun, in a press conference on Monday, attributed what she called the "excessive" off-season downpour to climatic changes brought about by "global warming."

Acosta said local governments should "be more conscious" of the location of human settlements in their jurisdiction.

They can start by checking whether houses are built on low-lying areas that "used to be rivers," he said.

This was exactly the case of one of the stricken villages, he said.

Drilon said a limited but total log ban would "let our forests recover."

Osmena said the country would have been under a total log ban had it not been for Speaker Jose de Venecia.

"Congress approved a total log ban in 1995. But Speaker De Venecia hid the conference committee report so it did not become a law," said Osmena.

To help the logging and furniture industries to be affected by a total log ban, Pangilinan said Congress should make funds available in the current budget which has yet to be enacted.

Musical chairs in Cabinet looms

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

WITH A Cabinet decimated by a string of resignations and a death in recent weeks, President Macapagal-Arroyo is reportedly planning to play musical chairs among her Cabinet men.

A Malacañang official yesterday disclosed that the President is seriously considering the appointment of Interior Secretary Jose Lina, who has abandoned his plan to run for the Senate, as the new justice secretary.

Lina will replace outgoing Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong who resigned from his post at the Department of Justice a few days ago to run for a seat in Congress in his home province of Maguindanao.

A Malacañang source revealed that the President is eyeing Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza to fill up Lina's post. The source said the President was still pondering on who will replace Mendoza at the Department of Transportation and Communications.

But when reporters asked the President on who her next justice

secretary would be, she replied "not yet" and walked away.

The position of justice secretary became vacant yesterday after Malacañang failed to appoint a replacement for Datumanong.

Datumanong said he did not appoint an officer-in-charge because the Palace had told him that his replacement was going to be announced before his resignation took effect at 5 p.m. yesterday.

A press conference scheduled late afternoon yesterday, where the new Cabinet appointments would be announced, was canceled.

As of press time yesterday, the Palace had yet to name Datumanong's successor.

Justice Undersecretary Jose Calida has reportedly taken over as acting Justice Secretary.

Datumanong bid farewell yesterday to reporters and employees at the DOJ.

"I would be leaving the DOJ with the consolation that I have contributed to the improvement of the administration of justice. During my term, I strongly recommended the increase in the compensation of prosecutors of government lawyers of the DOJ. This will motivate them in further improving their performance," he said.

Aside from Lina, a source said, another strong contender for the DOJ post is Calida. Other possible successors are Justice Undersecretary Ma. Mercedes Gutierrez and retired Supreme Court Justice Josue Bellosillo.

But Lina has allegedly turned down the offer during Monday's Cabinet meeting while Palace is allegedly having second thoughts about Calida because of his links to Bro. Eddie Villanueva, head of the Jesus Is Lord (JIL) movement.

Palace on FPJ: The more the merrier

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christine O. Avendaño

THE MORE the merrier.

This is what Malacañang said yesterday, albeit belatedly, following the announcement by actor Fernando Poe Jr. that he had accepted the opposition's nomination to be its candidate for president.

Poe is widely perceived to be

the biggest stumbling block to a fresh term for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The more choices the better for our people, the better for our democracy," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye in an interview over dzRB radio.

Poe accepted the nomination of the new opposition coalition, the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), on Monday, erasing

any doubts about his hesitancy to run for the country's highest post.

Ms Macapagal, who has underscored her experience in running the country in order to set herself apart from the other presidential candidates, had said earlier that she welcomed Poe's entry into politics.

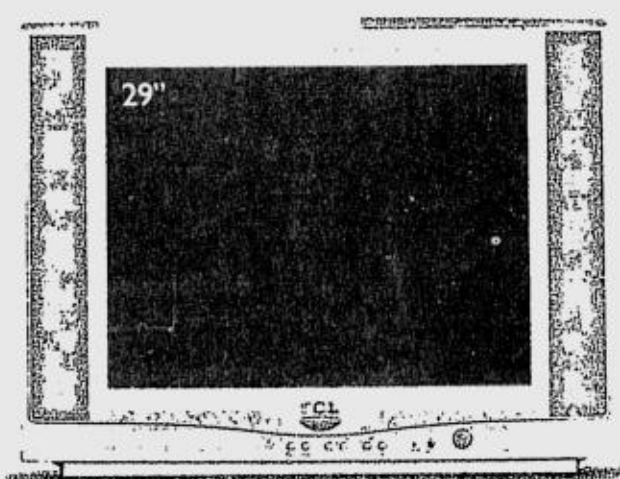
Malacañang said that while the opposition was still far from be-

ing united—what with Sen. Panfilo Lacson contesting Poe's nomination—the President has been getting more support from other parties like the Nationalist People's Coalition and "former henchmen" of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

The President's campaign spokesperson, Housing Secretary Michael Defensor, identified the "Estrada henchmen" as former

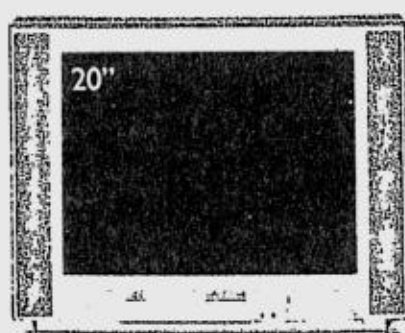
Speaker Noli Fuentebella, former Caloocan City Rep. Luis "Baby" Asistio, former Rizal Gov. Casimiro Yñares, Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn and Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson.

Defensor said the President is expected to finalize the ruling Lakas-CMD party's national slate by Dec. 28 in Baguio City where she traditionally spends Christmas and New Year with her family.



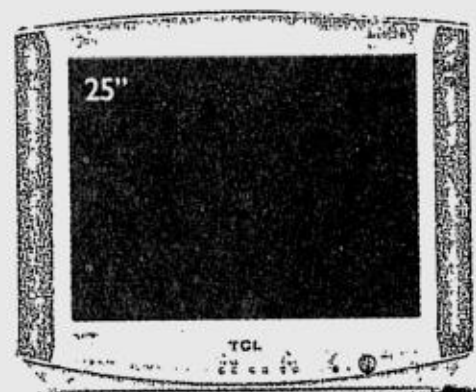
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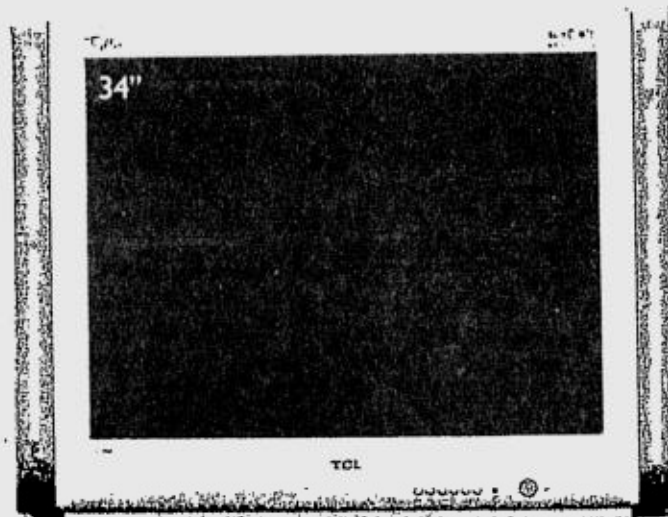
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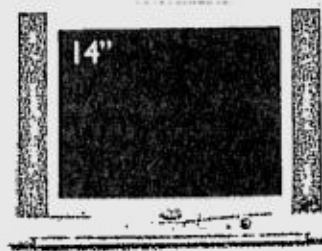
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GMA asks ERC to rethink power rates

By Juliet Labog-Javellana
and Philip C. Tubeza

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is asking the Energy Regulatory Commission to "review" its decision to grant the Manila Electric Co. a provisional increase of 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour even as the Freedom from Debt Coalition and several party-list representatives called on the Supreme Court to issue a temporary restraining order to stop Meralco and ERC from implementing the increase on Jan. 1.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said this was the sentiment of the President after the ERC junked a petition from at least nine consumer and public interest groups asking it to revoke its provisional grant of a rate hike.

"The President is calling on the ERC, through our representatives attending the public hearings, to review the basis for the grant of a provisional increase," Bunye said in an interview with the

state-run Radyo ng Bayan.

He explained the President's position as being for "stemming" the tide of power rate hikes. He said she has called on the ERC to take into consideration the welfare of the power consumers in its decisions, "balanced against the stability and viability of the power supply."

Meralco announced on Dec. 1 that it had been granted a petition to raise its rates by 12 centavos per kWh starting on the first day of the New Year.

Bunye said the ERC should explain to the public the basis for its decision and expressed hope that the issue would be threshed out in the public hearings on Meralco's petition to be conducted by the ERC next month.

In its petition, the FDC said the Supreme Court has to intervene immediately because the ERC has "failed to live up to its mandate to protect the public interest."

"It is clear that respondent ERC, mandated by law to protect the rights of

the consuming public, cannot be counted upon to do so because it has thrown its lot with respondent Meralco. For this reason, only this court may provide the relief petitioners pray for," it said.

Without the intervention of the court through a TRO, consumers would be "gravely and irreparably injured" as a new round of electricity rate increases would be "foisted" on them, the petitioners said.

Aside from FDC president Ana Maria Nemenzo, the other petitioners were Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, Partido Manggagawa Rep. Renato Magtubo, Sanlakas Rep. JV Bautista and Ma. Theresa Diokno-Pascual.

They asked the SC to declare as unconstitutional a portion of the Energy Power Industry Reform Act's (Epira) implementing rules which gives the ERC the power to grant a provisional authority to grant rate increases to utilities.

They also asked the court to nullify the provisional authority that the ERC gave

to Meralco on Nov. 27. They asked the SC to make permanent any TRO it issues, prohibit the ERC from taking any action on Meralco's petition, and enjoin both parties from carrying out the order.

In a statement that they later issued, the group denounced the "propensity of ERC to grant provisional authorities in favor of utilities to the detriment of consumers."

"In the case of Meralco, it was given a provisional increase on its rates in 1994. The SC, however, has ordered Meralco to refund the provisional increase. Until now, Meralco has failed to refund the whole amount," the group added.

FDC called the public hearing that the ERC held on Monday "a sham."

"The ERC's patent refusal to allow relief for consumers during the public hearing is a manifest bias for Meralco," the group said.

They noted that even if the next hearing was scheduled for Jan. 5, 2004, the ERC still refused to reconsider or hold in abeyance its provisional grant of an increase to Meralco.

Roco cuts VP shortlist to 3

PRESIDENTIAL hopeful Raul Roco's "shortlist" for a running mate is down to three, his campaign manager Jaime Galvez-Tan said on Monday.

Tan did not give names.

In a forum with Migrant earlier this month, Roco told reporters he was considering a tandem with either Senate President Franklin Drilon, Sen. Manuel Villar, or former Cebu governor Lito Osmeña.

But Osmeña, whose Promdi Party is now aligned with Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko and Rene de Villa's Reporma, has said he would no longer run for office.

During a press conference Monday, Roco was tight-lipped about his prospective vice president. He promised to make the announcement on Dec. 30, when his whole slate was set to file certificates of candidacy.

Roco said his running mate might have to campaign separately, anyway, since Filipino voters did not usually vote for a tandem.

2 Estradas in the Senate? Why not, says Jinggoy

By Jo Clemente
PDI Central Luzon Desk

TARLAC CITY—If there are two Osmeñas in the Senate, why not two Estradas?

This scenario is not far-fetched after former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada signified his intent to run for a seat in the August chamber in next year's May elections.

The eldest son of deposed president Joseph Estrada and incumbent Sen. Luisa 'Loi' Estrada said he has made himself available for a national position and would accept it if he would be included in the senatorial slate of movie actor Fernando Poe Jr.

Jinggoy brushed aside criticisms that he would be perpetuating political dynasties if he wins and joins his mother in the Senate. The term of her mother expires in 2007 yet.

Asked what it was that his mother could not do now as senator that he has to run for the same post, Jinggoy said that with the two of them in the Senate, they could better serve the people.

"She can only do so much now *kasi nakafreeze ang funds niya* (because her funds are frozen)," Jinggoy said. He, however, did not elaborate on the issue.

At present, there are two Osmeñas in the Senate—Sen. Sergio Osmeña III and Sen. John Osmeña, who are first cousins. The latter Osmeña is running for reelection next year.

Addressing a gathering of followers of a former mayor here Monday night, Jinggoy sought their support not only for his presidential choice, fellow actor Poe, but also for himself. Poe formally accepted Monday his nomination as the presidential standard bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino in the May 2004 elections.

While he did not announce the position he is running for, Jinggoy told the gathering that he and Poe would be filing their certificates of candidacy on Jan. 2.

The younger Estrada also told the INQUIRER that he was not bothered by the likelihood that his campaign would all be spent defending himself and his family against accusations that they plundered the nation's coffers while in power.

"*Mabuti nga yun nang malaman ng tao* (That is good so the people will know). I was jailed for two years, *kung totoo yan, wala sana ako dito ngayon* (if that were true, I would not be here)," he said.

Satur decries harassment of leftist bets

By Cynthia D. Balana

THE CONTINUED harassment of left-leaning candidates is a preview of what could be one of the bloodiest elections in history, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo, said yesterday.

Ocampo said this as he urged the government to act speedily against the growing harassment conducted by paramilitary groups against Bayan Muna and its allied militant organizations participating in the party-list election next year.

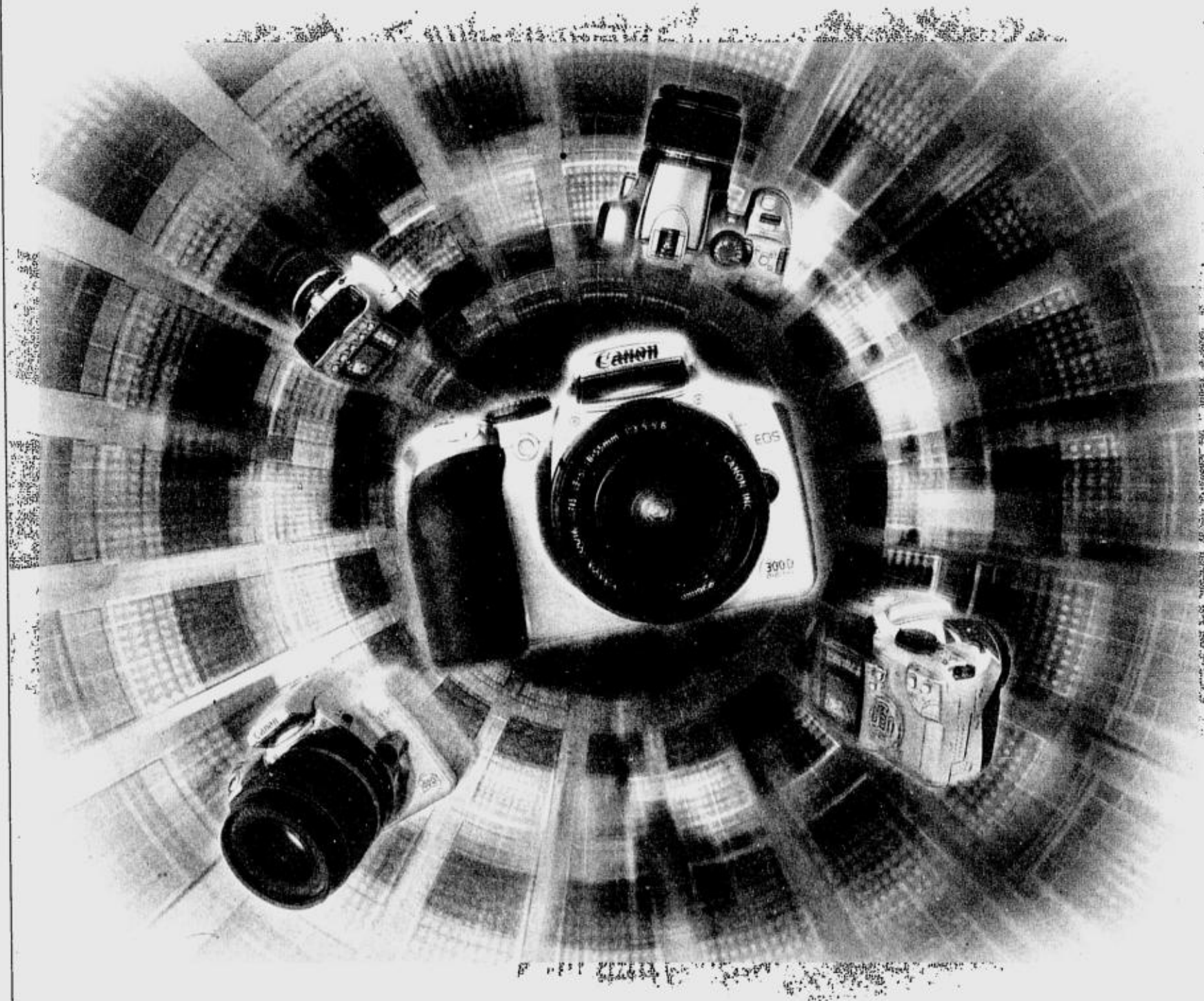
Despite the harassments, however, Ocampo still expressed faith in the government to uphold a peaceful and honest election as he called on authorities to defend all candidates, regardless of their political ideology.

Ocampo said that 33 of his members had been killed by rightist-extremist groups while fresh reports of intimidation against his supporters in the provinces, including a grenade throwing incident in Mindoro recently, continued.

The congressman then urged the Commission on Elections and government law enforcement agencies to focus on certain provinces like Mindoro and in some parts of Mindanao where red-baiting tactics are being played to sully the election process.

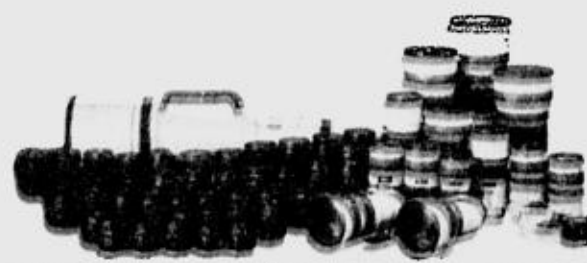
A preview of what was to come to left-leaning candidates in the next elections was discussed in a recent public forum organized by Bayan Muna and the human rights group Karapatan.

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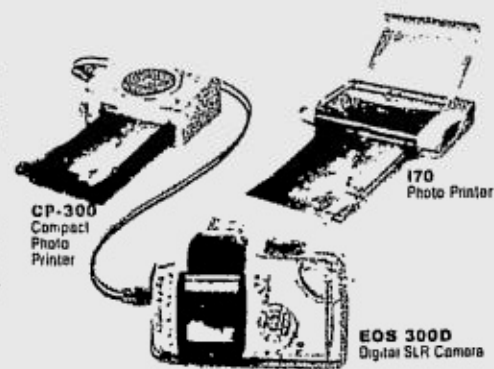
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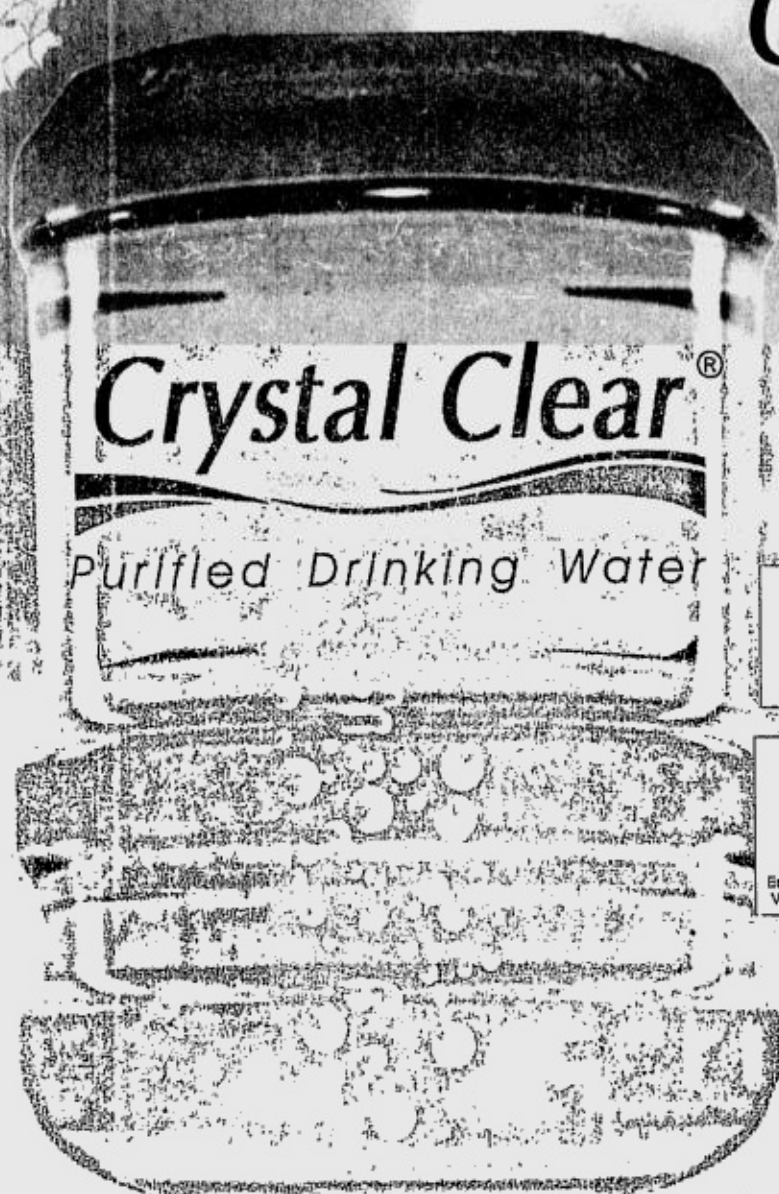
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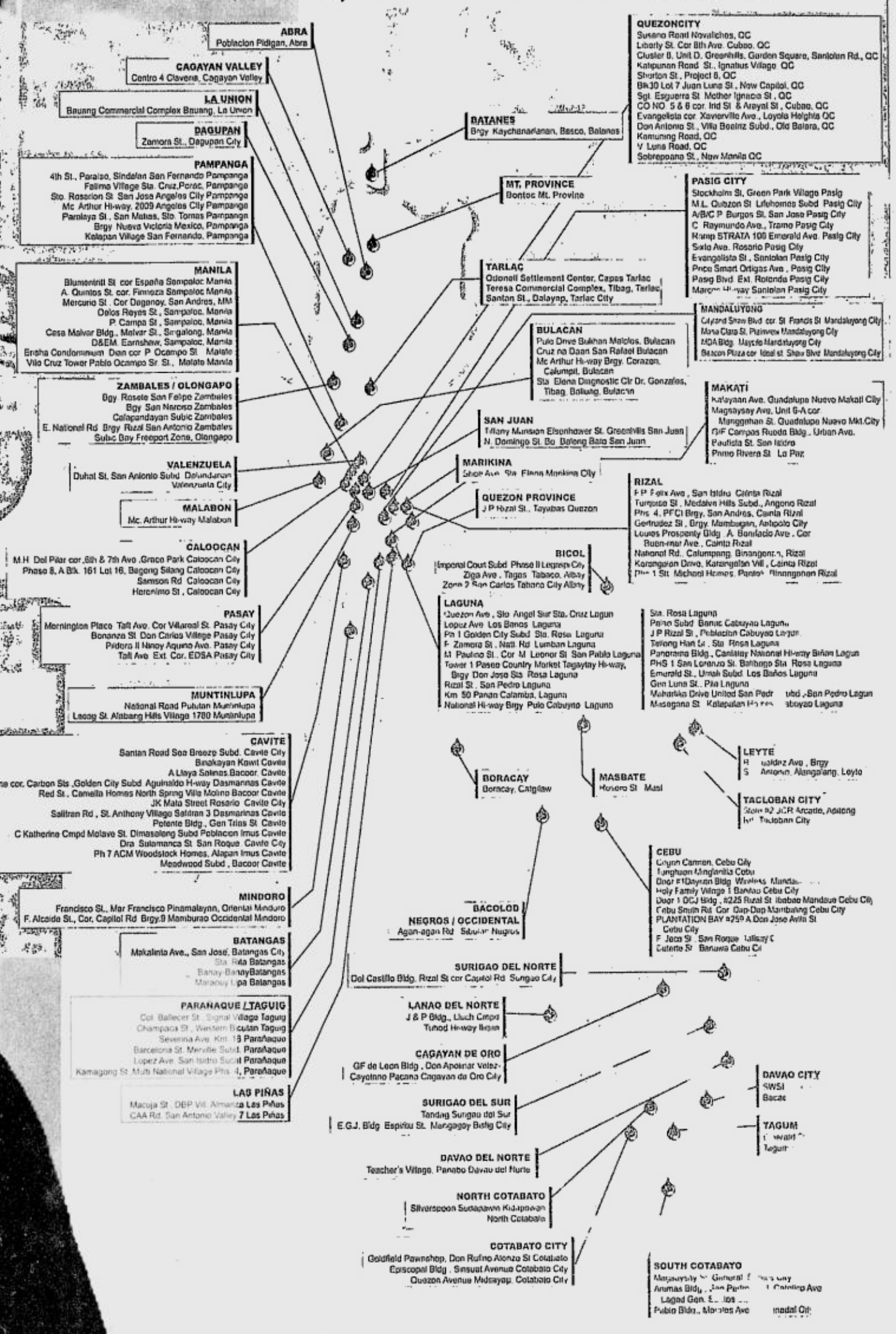
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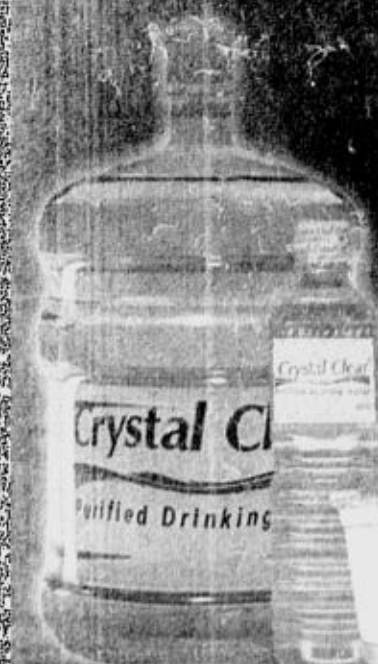
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Erap allowed to go to US

From page A1

ing that the honorable justices of the special division will grant my wish to be with my mother for the holidays."

Worsening health

In its ruling, the court cited Estrada's deteriorating health and the fact that there was no "express provision of law upon which the prohibition" for Estrada's travel was "anchored."

"When the accused first sought permission to go abroad for medical treatment, there was no evidence that he stood to lose the use of his limbs should his ailment remain untreated. Thus, in balancing the interest of the state to effective administration of justice against movant's right to doctor of his choice, this Court decided in favor of the former," the court said.

"The instant motion gives the Court the opportunity to reconsider its stance and bring into equation principles of equity as applied to the deterioration of movant's health which will eventually lead to his paralysis," the court said.

Paralysis

In its decision, the court gave full credence to the testimony of Dr. Antonio G. Calanoc, a spine surgeon at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center, who warned that Estrada's spinal cord was "compressed" and "strangulated," which may result in the former leader's "paralysis of the lower extremities."

Although Calanoc admitted that a knee replacement operation, which would ease the compression of Estrada's spinal cord, could be done here, the spine surgeon also said Estrada was enti-



ESTRADA: Good news and bad

tled to choose his own doctor.

Estrada wants his longtime knee surgeon Christopher Mow of the Stanford Medical Center to operate on him.

"The foregoing considered, the Court cannot be so heartless as to deprive movant his choice of surgeon and hospital this time around considering his health which will lead to paralysis," the resolution read.

Grim scenario

"In the light of movant's continued refusal to risk surgery here even at the cost of a painful and debilitating loss of movement, the Court is loath to maintain the status quo and risk the grim scenario painted by Dr. Calanoc. Consequently, inasmuch as prohibiting movant from seeking medical help abroad may eventually lead to his paralysis, with the judicial system perceived, albeit wrongly, as acting too harsh(ly) and without justice ... (the court) allows movant to travel to the United States of America," the court said.

PI-M travel bond

A travel bond of P1 million was imposed.

The resolution was signed by Presiding Justice Minita Chico-Nazario and Associate Justices Teresita Leonardo-de Castro, Diosdado Peralta and Norberto Galdes Sr.

Associate Justice Edilberto Sandoval dissented, saying that the argument that "only a legislative act can impose restrictions on the right to travel is a myopic interpretation" of the law and jurisprudence.

He cited the Supreme Court ruling that "a person's right to travel is subject to the usual constraints imposed by the very necessity of safeguarding the system of justice."

Apart from having "miserably failed to show" the necessity of having the operation done abroad, Sandoval also pointed out that Estrada was facing serious charges punishable by death.

He warned that all efforts to give Estrada undue rights "will all come to naught if movant fails to return from the United States as is rightly or wrongly feared by the prosecution."

4 PNP escorts

To preclude the possibility of flight, the court ordered Philippine National Police Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. to name four police escorts to accompany Estrada during the time he is abroad and provide regular reports on Estrada's travels within the United States.

Estrada was directed to foot the bill for expenses involving the escorts.

Estrada was also asked to submit the list of names and addresses of his doctors, identify the hospital and specify the period of confinement within seven days upon arriving in the United States.

He is barred from traveling to any other country apart from the United States. His trial will also continue in his absence.

Palace reaction

Malacañang welcomed the Sandiganbayan's decision but at the same time responded defensively.



WORLD-CLASS singer in the land of fairy tales, Christian Mendoza is proclaimed the new singing "Idol" after besting 1,500 contestants in a Danish TV singing contest.

Pinoy teen Denmark's newest singing idol

From page A1

because he's Filipino, with the blackest eyes and color-frosted black hair.

He's also named Christian, though—last name, Mendoza—and he's only 16. He rode to fame not on a unicorn but via a Danish nationwide television singing contest called "Idols," beating more than 1,500 aspirants, most of them local amateurs.

What did they expect?

The contest was broadcast live weekly, starting in October. Mendoza won every bout to get to the culminating edition of the contest last Wednesday, Dec. 17.

For that showdown, Mendoza traded vocal pitches and punches with a 17-year-old boy from the former Yugoslavia.

The rest of the 10 finalists were Danes.

Judges delight

Hundreds of thousands of viewers who faithfully followed the search were asked on Wednesday to pick their choice online or by phone. The plucky Pinoy got 57 percent of the votes. Not that he was dependent on virtual audience approval. From the start, he had delighted the Danish judges as much with his singing talent as with his facility with the language, although he has lived in Copenhagen for just over two years.

Mendoza's top prize is a contract with BMG Records International. Two days after his victory, his first single "Mystery to Me,"

written by Swedish composer Mats Hestrom, went on sale across the country. His debut album will be released end of February.

In a newspaper interview, Mendoza declared—in proper Danish—that winning "Idols" was the best Christmas gift anyone could hope for.

OFW mom

A native of Manila, Mendoza spent eight years away from his mother, Maria Luisa, who works here. They were reunited in 2001, when Mendoza finally migrated.

Before then, their future together in a foreign land was fraught with uncertainty. Now the young man knows he can, in fact, teach the Danes a tune or two.

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Tanker rescues 20 but 55 still missing

From page A1

Malabanan said the Navy learned about the rescue five hours later and immediately sent the BRP Quezon to rendezvous with the MV Pacific Valor, which was en route from Guangdong, China, to Sandakan, Malaysia.

The BRP Quezon turned over the survivors at about 3 p.m. Tuesday to the BRP Carlos Albert, which was directed to bring them to Brookes Point for medical attention.

The survivors included a 10-year-old girl and two boys aged 6 and 9. Seven of the ferry's 69 passengers on the manifest were children.

The BRP Quezon raced back to the vicinity of Fearless Shoal to pick up five other survivors who were spotted by an Air Force OV-10 plane at about 1 p.m. Tuesday.

Clinging to life

Coast Guard spokesperson Lt. Armand Balilo said the five were seen drifting in choppy waters and clinging to debris from the ML Pia-ry. Balilo said the five were wearing life vests.

Sixteen of the survivors are from Mapun. They were identified as Golden Sibil, 52; Jeffrey Mirod, 17; Mads Mirod, 55; Binare Saipay, 32; Etom Badidil, 60; Saiton Masirol, 58; Johan Hassan, 32; Apang Sibil, 48; Sahada Abdurahim, 45; Nora Adani, 30; Samsudin Sarail, 9; Norlea Muhammad, 40; Sandra Asaral, 32; Ninin Asaral, 10; Joey Muhammad, 6; and Alex Muhammad, 9.

Also rescued were Nasilin Muhammad, 55, from Rio Tuba, Palawan; Wowe Kulabin, 19, from Brookes Point, Palawan; and Lambry Carim, 50, and Garcia Jaali, 19, from Puerto Princesa City.

Not in manifest

Officials said nearly half of the survivors were not on the ML Pia-ry's manifest.

Commodore Constancio Jardianiano, chief of Naval Forces West, said two boats and a plane had been placed on standby for search and rescue operations.

Mapun Mayor Nicorson Tan said he had advised the M/L Pia-ry captain, Roslan Macasaet, to postpone the trip to Brookes Point due to bad weather. Tan said Macasaet insisted on going ahead with the voyage.

Tan said most of the passengers were supposed to attend a wedding in Sofronio Espanola. The groom was also on board the

motorized launch.

Adelaida Sarail, who had relatives among the passengers, said she also tried to dissuade the captain from sailing.

"The boat was very old and dingy and the accommodation was very bad," she added.

Wooden-hulled

Commodore Arthur Gosigan, the chief of the Coast Guard, said the ML Pia-ry should not have been allowed to sail.

But Gosigan said that outside the primary ports served by major domestic ferry and cargo shipping lines, wooden-hulled vessels were the only means of transport between points in many parts of the country.

"Wood is the only means of transport from one island to another in many areas," Gosigan said on dzBB radio.

These vessels make up "almost 80-90 percent" of the domestic fleet, he added.

"The transport of resources from one place to another would stop" were they to be taken off abruptly, he said.

Fleet modernization

Following a series of deadly maritime disasters involving wooden-hulled vessels over the past three years, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the Maritime Industry Authority to effect fleet modernization with a gradual phase-out of the rickety wooden hulls.

The government also barred these types of vessels from sailing at night, and ordered that ships that reach a certain number of years in service be retired.

Commuters' opposition

Opposition from commuters and vessel operators, however, had forced the government to amend the implementing guidelines, Gosigan said.

In the Philippines, foreign vessels are barred from transporting people or cargo on domestic routes and Gosigan said there was scant capital or inclination to invest in vessels with fiberglass or metal hulls.

"It has to be a gradual phase-out so the economy will not be affected," he said.

Gosigan said authorities have to make do with increased safety inspections of vessels. *With reports from TJ Burgonio, Leila B Salaverria, AP and AFP*

No Christmas dinner for abandoned 'lola'

From page A1

vent. It was one of the few times she was not on the street. She heard Mass, thanking the Lord she was still alive.

"I know they would come for me so I'm not going anywhere," she tells the INQUIRER, in Filipino, late Monday night.

Age, arthritis

You won't miss Lola Alodia at the Edsa-Shaw intersection.

Age and arthritis have literally brought her low. Stopped almost to her knees, she is a virtual cripple. It takes her forever to get to the cars at the intersection.

She cannot run and wrestle with much younger vagrants for a coin or two. By the time she gets to a car, the light has already turned green and she ends up, dangerously, in the middle of the street. Then she crawls back to the sidewalk.

Grace comes occasionally, when Lola Alodia receives more than a few coins from complete strangers.

On Monday, someone gave her P500 and a bag of canned goods. She felt so lucky she wanted to rush "home" the moment she got the goodies. So she gingerly crossed to the other side of Edsa and waited for a bus to take her to Novaliches.

"This must be my luckiest day. Thank you very much, thank you very much. May God bless you. May God bless you always," she thanked the man before leaving.

Novaliches shanty

Home for Lola Alodia is a shanty Neneng, a niece of hers, rents from another squatter in Barangay Sauyo.

She arrived there from the province more than two years ago. She says she was supposed to help Neneng earn a living but instead ended up being "baggage."

Neneng gets sewing jobs occasionally from similarly poor neighbors.

But poor health owing largely to old age and poor diet (or the lack of it) has kept Lola Alodia from sewing, the only job she knows besides farming.

Arthritis has long limited her movements. An "enlarged" heart sends her panting after a few shaky steps. Worse, liver problems forced her to undergo an operation in September. She was sidelined for two months.

It was then that Lola Alodia realized she had no other choice but to remain a beggar. "I was filled with shame before my niece. She's been feeding me. It's time that I work for my medicine."

Regular routine

Lola Alodia's regular routine starts at night.

With one hand pressed to her wounds and the other holding a plastic bag of personal belongings,



THERE'S no room anywhere for Octogenarian Alodia Meriz who's been looking for her two children.

RANDY HORMILLOSA

she takes the bus from Novaliches all the way to Edsa Crossings at around 7 in the evening.

Cubao and Fairview are much nearer and more accessible. But pedestrians there, she says, are not as generous as those at Crossings.

Upon arrival at her "workplace" two hours later, she entrusts her plastic bag to the balut vendor at the corner. She then tries to walk up to the first pedestrian or motorist she sees.

Lola Alodia can't compete with more active child beggars in the area. She can't walk even for 10 minutes straight. She has to pause, sit down and wait for the pain to subside. For all the misery, sometimes she earns P200. On some other days, she doesn't receive a single centavo.

After "work," she wants to go home, but the weather is not always on her side.

Lola's life

This is life for Lola Alodia—slow and agonizing.

Doctors at a Quezon City hospital where she underwent surgery had told her to rest. Much as she wanted to comply, she had to go back to the streets.

Sometimes, on lucky days, a stranger would notice her grimacing in pain and offer to walk her across the street. She takes comfort in the gesture.

Provincial life

Life was not exactly better for Lola Alodia in Cabanatuan, where she was born, raised, and started her own family.

She's the elder of two daughters by her mother, a sewer, and a father who was more of a womanizer than a provider.

While working as a part-time driver, the father sped off with another woman when Lola Alodia was still very young. She says she never saw him in person, but his decision haunted the family for years.

She left school when she was in the fifth grade and juggled work on the farm and in the barrio as her mother's sewing assistant.

Lola Alodia married at 16 and had her first child at 19, who died at birth. So did the next four babies. Only Annalyn and Jerry survived but she can't even see them now. Her husband, a cement worker, died more than 20 years ago.

Writes poetry

On days when she's not on the streets, Lola Alodia writes poetry. She's written many, she says, three of which she could recite with ease despite her age.

In "Damit Na Naging Basahan" (Clothes Turned Rags) she tells of the poverty she's experienced all her life. "Kumbaga Sa Punong Kahoy" (Like a Tree) compares an old woman to a tree that endures though it no longer bears fruit.

The third is the most agonizing to hear. "Inihahandog Ko Sa Aking Minamahal (A Gift to My Beloved)" is a three-stanza poem of painful longing for her two children.

"Di ako nagtatampo na ako ay di mo pansin/at wala ring hinanakit kung malayo ka sa akin," she recites.

"Nawala mang lahat-lahat ang pagmamahal mo noon/darasin ko na lamang sa mahal na panginoon/na lagi kang pagpalain saan ka man naroroon."

Lola Alodia says she believes her daughter Annalyn cannot take her to Isabela because she's probably ashamed she's only living with her in-laws there.

Her daughter may also be aware that she was somehow disappointed when Jerry followed Annalyn to Isabela in 1999. He was working at a gas station in Manila then and was supporting his mother at the time.

Waiting for children

The miserable sight of Lola Alodia begging at a busy intersection has led many to try to convince her to go to the Home for the Aged.

But she says she's not about to live in some government institution. During her birthday Mass, she says, she prayed not for physical comfort but for the chance to be with her two children again.

In the meantime, the Edsa-Shaw junction is Lola Alodia's home. She'll leave only when her children finally send for her.

"My children are good," she says. "They'll keep their promise. I'll wait. It's so cold outside."

US, Japan, UN lead international donors

From page A1

and landslides have left nearly 200 people dead on the island.

The US Agency for International Development would be providing P2.7 million cash to support disaster relief operations in the affected areas, according to the US Embassy.

Ready-to-eat meals

In addition, a C-130 helicopter

from the Joint US Military Assistance Group is scheduled to deliver 100 cases of ready-to-eat meals, basic medical supplies, plastic sheetings, blankets, dried noodles and 1,200 pairs of shoes to the survivors.

American expatriates and members of the American Women's Club of the Philippines would also send donations of cash and clothing.

Ricciardone and Usaid country director Michael Yates joined Ms Macapagal in visiting the affected areas yesterday morning.

Japan will be extending emergency assistance worth 15.9 million yen (approximately P8 mil-

lion) to boost relief and rescue operations, according to the Japanese Embassy's information center.

The aid includes tents that can accommodate 20 persons each, generators, cables, water tanks, shovels, tool sets and blankets.

Initial shipment

The initial shipment of goods and equipment arrived in Manila yesterday morning from the Japanese government's warehouse in Singapore. The embassy immediately coordinated with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and turned

over the aid in the afternoon.

Japanese Ambassador Tochiyo Takano also expressed his country's sympathy and condolence to the victims.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Monday that the United Nations was trying to round up aid to help the Philippines cope with disaster.

"The secretary general was distressed to learn of the casualties and damage caused by landslides and floods in the central part of the Philippines," Annan's spokesperson Fred Eckhard said. "He conveys his condolences and deepest sympathy." *With AFP report*

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Leyte, Surigao landslide victims need your help

From page A1

ern Leyte) and the Diocese of Surigao (Surigao del Norte and Surigao City).

The victims and their families need emergency aid, including food and medicines. Because the area is inaccessible, cash donations will be appreciated. The donations will be coursed through the Social Action Centers and local parishes of the two church partners who have mobilized local volunteers and coordinated with some agencies for humanitarian response.

Cash donations may be deposited directly to the savings accounts of the two Catholic Dioceses:

1. Diocese of Maasin:

RCBC Account No. 1131004459

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Center

PNB Account No.: 668810248-9

Account Name: Roman Catholic Bishop of

Maasin

Contact Persons: Bishop Precioso Cantillas,

D.D.

Fr. Max Casinao Jr.—social action direc-

tor—0919-4995349

Sr. Norie Seit—0919-2331836 or

053-3812033 or 053-5708435

2. Diocese of Surigao:

Account Name: Roman Catholic Bishop of

Surigao

BPI Surigao Account No.: 9381002478

Contact Persons: Bishop Antonieto D.

Cabajog, SVD, D.D.

Fr. Julio Diola—Oecon-

omus—086-8261316 or 086-2317423

The INQUIRER will give regular updates on the status of aid being given to the victims.

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Get your act together, Comelec tells LDP

By Carlito Pablo

THE COMMISSION on Elections has told the fractious Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) to get its act together or lose the right to have an accredited candidate for president in 2004.

This after the opposition party has been split by the candidacies of actor Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

LDP secretary general Rep. Agapito Aquino (Makati) said Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos told him at a meeting yesterday that Poe and Lacson could end up being accredited as "independent candidates" if the LDP fails to resolve the infighting within its ranks.

Aquino leads an LDP faction that wants

Lacson, a party member, to be the opposition's candidate for president.

LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara, on the other hand, heads a wing that supports Poe, who is not a party member.

"The Comelec does not want to take sides (in the LDP rift) but if this is not resolved, it's very likely both (Poe and Lacson) will be treated as independent candidates," Aquino said.

He said the Comelec has called a meeting of the two LDP factions after Christmas to settle their differences.

"Chairman Abalos wants us to talk and resolve our internal problems," he said.

Aquino, however, insisted that Lacson would still be the LDP's presidential candidate, even if Poe has accepted the nomination

of the Angara wing.

"There should be no doubt that Lacson will carry the LDP banner," Aquino said.

Earlier, Angara said Lacson could not run under the LDP since the party was supporting Poe.

Angara had entered the LDP into a coalition with the Partido ng Masang Pilipino of deposed President Joseph Estrada and the PDP-Laban party called the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Aquino said the problem with Poe is that the actor is not a member of any political party.

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Lawmakers puzzled by case of missing poll automation bill

By Michael Lim Ubac

LAWMAKERS are in a quandary over a proposed law seeking selective automation for the elections next May.

Both Senators Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Francis Pangilinan were at a loss yesterday when asked about the status of the joint resolution approved by both chambers of Congress last Nov. 19.

If enacted, the proposed law will confine automated voting and counting to Metro Manila, Baguio City, Mandaue City, Lapu-Lapu City, Talisay City, Iloilo, Bacolod, provinces of Bataan, Albay and Cebu, Cagayan de Oro City and the Muslim Mindanao Region.

Pimentel said he wasn't sure if the joint resolution was still in Speaker Jose de Venecia's office,

or if it had been transmitted to Malacañang.

"It is an ominous development for a piece of legislation intended to safeguard the will of the people (but which) is apparently being frustrated by this unseemly maneuvers," said Pimentel.

Pangilinan simply said, "I really don't know." Selective automation was crucial, Pimentel said, because the proposed coverage accounted for about 25 percent of the voting population, estimated at 40 million.

He said he was against full automation because the capacity of the counting machines, known as nationwide automated vote-counting machines (AVCMs), to prevent cheating was still under question.

"At least, in selective automation, if the machines do not function well, they can immediately be replaced. In full automation, no back-up machines will be left," Pimentel pointed out.

He warned that a serious breakdown in computerized counting and the satellite transmission of results could lead to a declaration of failure of elections which, he said, was "a very dangerous situation (in which) to place the whole nation."

Lakas: Last party standing?

THE RULING party Lakas-CMD is confident it would be the last victorious party standing once the smoke of next year's elections clears.

Lakas spokesperson Joey Rufino told reporters yesterday that the declaration of the candidacy of action king Fernando Poe Jr. and the insistence of Sen. Panfilo Lacson on running for president has driven a wedge between opposition forces.

"We might be the only ones left. We will have the last woman standing," Rufino said, referring to Lakas standard-bearer President Macapagal-Arroyo.

As of the present, the party is still going through the selection process for Ms Macapagal's running mate despite disclosures that Sen. Noli de Castro would be her vice presidential candidate.

THE DAILY GOSPEL



Wednesday, December 24, 2003
4th Week of Advent

1st Reading: 2 S 7:1-5, 8-11, 16
Gospel: Lk 1:67-79

Zechariah, filled with holy spirit, sang this canticle,

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has come and redeemed his people. He has raised up for us a victorious Savior in the house of David his servant, as he promised through his prophets of old, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of our foes. He has shown mercy to our fathers and remembered his holy covenant, the oath he swore to Abraham, our father, to deliver us from the enemy, that we might serve him fearlessly as a holy and righteous people all the days of our lives.

And you, my child, shall be called prophet of the Most High, for you shall go before the Lord to prepare the way for him and enable his people to know of their salvation when he comes to forgive their sins. This is the work of the mercy of our God, who comes from on high as a rising sun shining on those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guiding our feet into the way of peace."

Commentary
Hope, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, involves the confident expectation of a bonum futurum arduum possibile: a good future, difficult to attain, but possible. Hope is based, not on human calculations of probable outcomes, but on faith in God's promises that he will give such a future. And the small signs of fulfillment that one perceives along the way nourish and keep hope alive. Zechariah's canticle is a song of hope. He sings of a new future of light for those in the shadow of death; he anticipates a people walking in the way of peace. Such expectations are founded on promises made by God through the prophets and to Abraham: promises of freedom, mercy and holiness. And already he rejoices as he sees his son, the child who will prepare the Lord's way, as a fragile but real sign that the divine promises are on their way to fulfillment. On Christmas eve, it is good to sing this song of hope with Zechariah, and like him, to discern the signs of hope's fulfillment for our heart's ease.

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Amoxicillin cap. 250 mg	3.10	8.95	5.85/cap
Amoxicillin cap. 500 mg	3.70	15.75	12.05/cap
Amoxicillin drops 125 mg/1.25 ml/10 ml	37.00	80.75	43.75/bot
Amoxicillin susp. 250 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	49.00	144.00	95.00/bot
Chloramphenicol cap. 500 mg	3.40	37.75	34.35/cap
Chloramphenicol susp. 125 mg/5 ml 60 ml	41.40	394.75	353.35/bot
Co-trimoxazole tab (TM-160mg SMZ-800mg)	2.30	26.00	23.70/tab
Co-trimoxazole cap. (TM-80mg SMZ-400mg)	2.60	14.80	12.20/cap
Co-trimoxazole susp. (TM-40mg SMZ-200mg)	25.00	115.75	90.75/bot
Anti-cough (Para sa Ubo)			
Bromhexine HCL syrup 4 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	26.70	74.75	48.05/bot
Carbocysteine cap. 500 mg	2.40	12.25	9.85/cap
Carbocysteine susp. 100 mg/5 ml, 60 ml	32.70	87.25	54.55/bot
Anti-diarrhea (Para sa Pagtatae)			
Loperamide cap. 2mg	1.80	10.25	8.45/cap

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

2 Baghdad deaths raise US toll past 200

BAGHDAD—Two US soldiers and an Iraqi interpreter died as Russia signaled readiness to forgive much of Iraqi's debt in exchange for favorable treatment of Russia's oil and other businesses.

The three died Monday when their convoy hit a roadside bomb in Baghdad, pushing to 201 US deaths in action since May 1, when US President George W. Bush declared major hostilities over.

The violence came as US sol-

diers arrested hundreds of suspected insurgents around central Iraq and Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski paid a surprise pre-Christmas visit to the Polish military headquarters near Babylon in the south.

An officer became the second Polish death Monday when his weapon accidentally discharged.

US civil administrator in Iraq Paul Bremer raised the specter of further attacks in Iraq waged by militants other than followers of Saddam Hussein, who was captured last week after eight months on the run.

Iraq's oil industry was jolted by another fuel pipeline fire, this time

on an artery linking the northern oil-rich city of Kirkuk and the country's largest refinery in Baiji.

The head of the Iraqi Governing Council said that Russia was ready to forgive at least some Iraqi debt in exchange for allowing Russian companies to work in Iraq.

"We... discussed the question of writing off Iraq's debt and we received a generous promise to write off the debt, or at least a part

of it," Abdul Aziz al-Hakim told reporters in Moscow after meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In return "we will be open to all Russian companies," he added.

Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani, another member of the Iraqi delegation in Moscow, said Russia had offered to cut Iraq's debt to \$3.5 billion.

"Russia said it is willing to consider the write-off of the rest of the

debt if it received beneficial treatment in terms of oil contracts," he said. The Iraqi delegation met the head of Russian oil giant LUKoil.

Iraq's debt to Russia has been estimated at \$8 billion, including \$4.5 billion in unpaid interest.

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said in Caracas that any debt reduction "will be discussed within the forms, the rules of the Paris Club." **AFP**

Palestinian militants attack Egypt envoy

JERUSALEM—Radical Palestinian Muslims yelling "traitor" attacked Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher in a Jerusalem mosque on Monday after landmark talks with Israeli leaders to try to revive a stalled peace plan.

Maher, 68, was rushed to a hospital for checks after the attack at al-Aqsa mosque, which overshadowed a meeting at which officials said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had indicated that Israel would welcome any truce by Palestinian militants.

Two of those Palestinian factions claimed responsibility for the killing of two Israeli army officers in an ambush in the Gaza Strip. An Israeli army spokesperson said tanks and helicopters swept into the area and one gunman was later shot dead.

Militants have so far rebuffed Egyptian efforts to secure a ceasefire and revive a US-backed peace plan, the "road map."

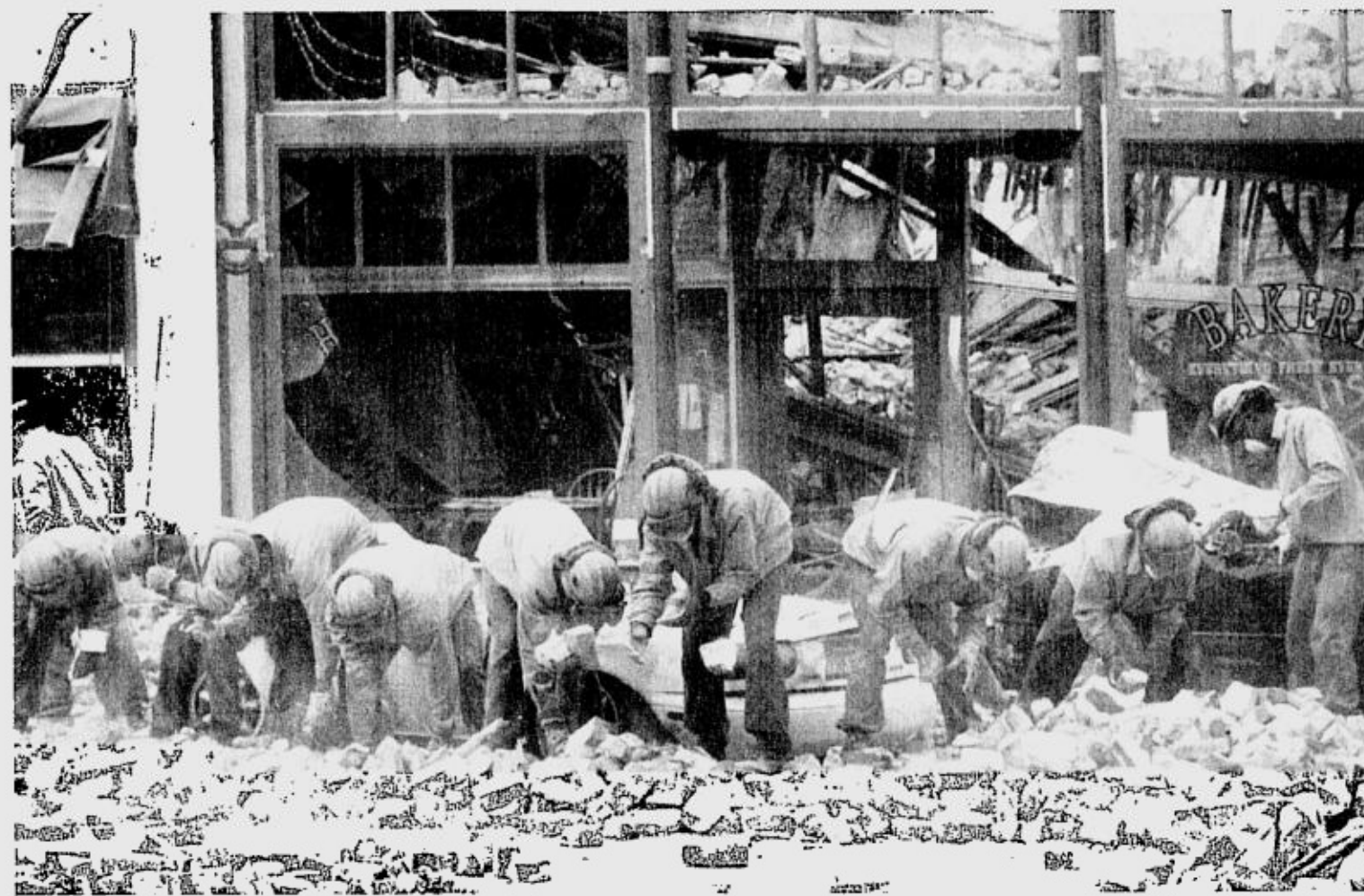
Witnesses said Maher was accosted, jostled and possibly struck by a mob shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is greater).

The mob threw shoes they had removed for prayers at his entourage and at Israeli police taking him out of the ancient mosque, Islam's third holiest shrine. Striking someone with a shoe is a traditional Muslim insult.

Television pictures showed Maher, pale and struggling for breath, being led from the melee by police and bodyguards and rushed to Hadassah Hospital for checks.

Maher later flew back to Cairo, where the government expressed "deep regret" at the assault but said Egypt's commitment to peace in the area was undimmed.

Relations between Israel and Egypt have recently begun to improve after taking a dive over Israel's crackdown on the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. **Reuters**



MEMBERS of the California Youth Authority clear bricks and rubble in front of a bakery after a two-story building collapsed in an earthquake Dec. 22, in Paso Robles, California.

Powerful quake hits California; 2 killed

PASO ROBLES, California—An earthquake rocked California's central coast and shook the state from Los Angeles to San Francisco, collapsing old downtown buildings in this small town and killing at least two people in the rubble.

The 11:16 a.m. quake Monday—its magnitude measured at 6.5—pitched the roof of Paso Robles' 1892 clock tower building into the street, crushing a row of parked cars in this San Luis Obispo County town about 30 km east of the epicenter. More than 40 other buildings were damaged.

It was the first deadly earthquake in California since the 6.7-magnitude temblor that hit Northridge in 1994, and the most powerful to strike the state since a 7.1 quake rocked the desert near Joshua Tree more than four years ago. No one

was killed in the 1999 quake.

The main shock Monday was centered in a sparsely populated area about 18 km north of the coastal town of Cambria. It was immediately followed by at least 50 aftershocks larger than 3.0, the biggest of which was estimated at 4.7, according to the US Geological Survey.

The quake shook the Hearst Castle in San Simeon, the estate of the legendary publisher William Randolph Hearst. The castle—a particularly popular tourist attraction at this time of year because of its Hearst family Christmas ornaments—reported no injuries and no immediate signs of any serious damage but was evacuated as a precaution.

The quake also rocked the federal courthouse in San Francisco,

265 km to the northwest of the epicenter, and sent the building's upper floors swaying for about 30 seconds. People in downtown Los Angeles, 300 km southeast, felt a sustained rolling motion.

"It was pretty sharp," said Sharyn Conn, receptionist at the oceanside Cypress Cove Inn in Cambria, population 6,200. "It really went on and on. I just got everyone under the door frames and rode it out."

In Paso Robles, a town of 25,000 people in a region dotted with wineries and horse ranches, searchers dug through the debris of the collapsed row of stores in the clock-tower building, pulling apart piles of bricks and mangled wood with their hands, shovels and heavy equipment.

The bodies of Jennifer Myrick, 19, of Atascadero, and Marilyn Za-

futo, 55, of Paso Robles, were found on the sidewalk outside a dress shop, police Sgt. Bob Adams said.

The owners of three cars damaged in the rubble were still unaccounted for. "They have not been reported missing but their whereabouts are unknown," Adams said. Two people with minor injuries were pulled from a badly damaged adjacent bakery.

"My roof basically jumped onto the street and landed on cars with people in them," said Nick Sherwin, 61, who operated Pan Jewelers in the building. The cars "are crushed like little toys, nothing left."

Marilyn Curry watched the buildings collapse from her law firm across the street, then ran to a city park where people were frantically searching for others they knew. **AP**



BONDING AT YULETIDE

Brian Kelliher teaches his 4-year-old daughter Lucy to skate at the National Museum of Art Sculpture Garden Ice Skating Rink Dec. 22 in Washington DC. **AFP**

Akihito marks 70th birthday

TOKYO—As Japan prepares to send soldiers to a conflict zone for the first time since World War II, Emperor Akihito marked his 70th birthday Tuesday by saying he's happy his reign has so far been peaceful—unlike that of his father, the late Emperor Hirohito.

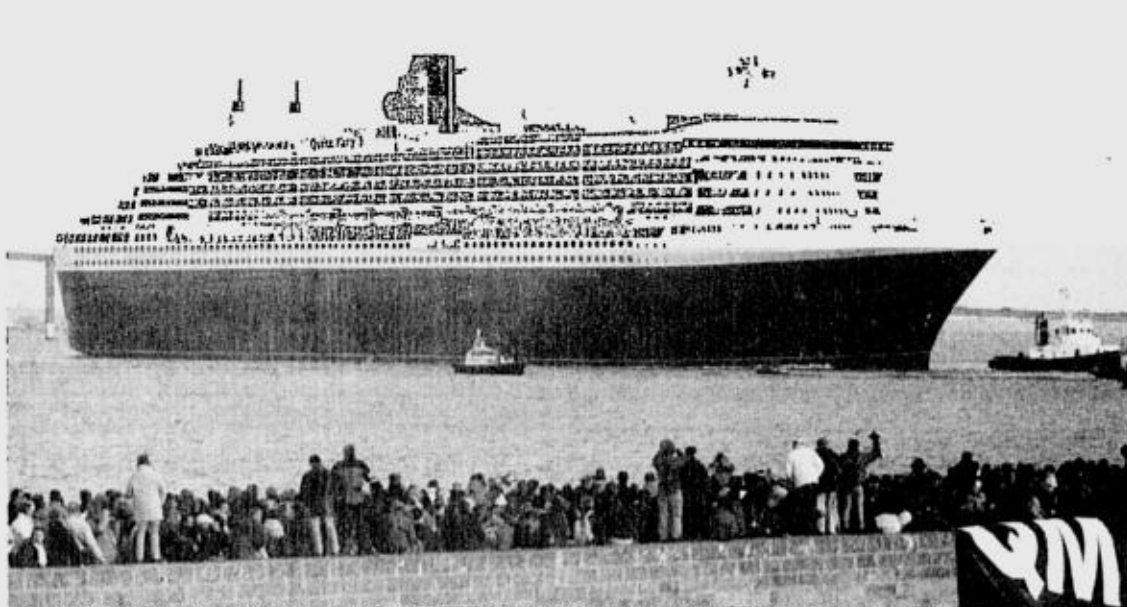
Akihito's birthday came as Japan prepares to send 1,000 non-combat troops on a humanitarian mission in Iraq. They're expected to leave Japan early next year.

The emperor did not comment Tuesday on the troop dispatch, which has sparked public debate in recent weeks. He only called for peace.

"I believe that, with a full understanding of our history, we must strive to bring peace to the whole world and security to all people," he said in comments marking his birthday and 15th year on the throne.

Akihito noted the difficulties faced by his father Hirohito, who reigned when an expansionist Japan plunged into World War II in his name. Hirohito was revered by his subjects as a living god until he renounced his divinity after the country's surrender in 1945.

Hirohito's 1926-1989 reign is referred to as Showa, which means "bright peace." His responsibility for wartime actions remains a major topic of historical debate. **AP**



THE QUEEN Mary 2, the world's biggest passenger liner is pulled by tugboats as it leaves the Saint Nazaire shipyard, western France, Dec. 22. **REUTERS**

Biggest passenger ship off to sea

SAINT-NAZAIRE, France—The Queen Mary 2, the world's biggest passenger liner, was given a low-key sendoff on Monday as it left its French shipyard, just five weeks after 15 people died in an accident during the final days of its fit-out.

The 345-meter long vessel, which was built over the last two years at a cost of 640 million euros (\$800 million), was pulled out to sea by tug-boat while tens of thousands of people bade farewell from the shore.

A British maritime flag flew from

its deck for the first time, following a handing-over ceremony earlier in the day during which its owner, Cunard, officially took possession of its new flagship to the sound of an orchestra playing the French and British national anthems.

"The ship is absolutely breathtaking," Cunard's chair Pamela Conover said.

After a brief journey to Spain, to get the crew accustomed to navigating its 150,000-ton bulk, the QM2 will head to its home port of Southampton in southern

England, where Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will formally name it in a ceremony on Jan. 8.

It will then leave on its maiden voyage, to Florida in the United States, with passengers paying from 1,300 to more than 30,000 euros for their cabins and access to the top-of-the-range features, including a 1,000-seat theater, a ballroom and five swimming pools.

Tickets for the maiden voyage are sold-out, as well as those for its Southampton-New York crossing in the Spring. **AFP**

Punta is so remote ...

From page A1

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Today, my husband, Joy de los Reyes, and I will be in Punta. (This is the first time that my whole family will spend Christmas there. Normally, my parents would visit us in Manila during Christmas, after which they would have their medical checkup.)

Our children—Antonio Isabelo, Aida Corazon and Jose Socrates—had gone ahead, arriving there last Friday. (Antonio and Aida are both Philippine Science High School students; Jose is a Grade 5 student at Ateneo.)

I had arranged for a van to take them from Tacloban, passing Hilongos to collect their two cousins and my father's 2-year-old great-grandson, who were coming in from Cebu, then proceeding to Liloan where my sister Rebecca was waiting. She had just arrived from Canada with her French-Canadian husband for a three-week vacation.

Impassable

As the road between Liloan and San Francisco was already impassable by then because of the continuous rains, the group proceeded to San Francisco by pump boat, an hour-long trip around the island.

Little did we know that an hour after the children arrived in San Francisco at 5 p.m. on Dec. 19, tragedy would strike.

Last 100 relatives

Relatives tried to call me Friday night but I was beyond reach as I was working overtime on a book project. They were hesitant to call my cousin Eddie, who drives for us, because they did not want to tell him that his parents, nephew and niece were missing.

Power was out and, consequently, phone lines were down in San Francisco. It was a call from my aunt in Davao that jolted me early Saturday morning. Then another cousin in San Francisco thought of turning on his generator so relatives could call out.

And that was how I received an eyewitness account from my cousin Ricky, barangay captain of Punta.

The extent of the devastation started to become clear to me. Soon, relatives working in Metro Manila were calling me, and I spent the whole day repeating the grim story Ricky had told—that at least 80 members of our clan may have died in the landslides.

Our death toll, as relayed to me early yesterday morning, is now over 100.

Never hungry

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Children, elderly

As in many other villages of San Francisco, the residents of Punta are mostly children and the elderly. Many of the able-bodied have left to seek better job opportunities elsewhere, just as my parents did in 1949 when they decided to try their luck in Davao.

Some chose to stay, like Ricky, one of the clan's best carpenters, and Ismael or Maying, the lead fisherman.

But most of them never fail to come back in May, when San Francisco's fiesta is celebrated on May 15 and Punta's on May 19. It is during these times that cousins, who would have remained unacquainted, get to meet.

While May means fiestas and more visitors, I prefer to go home to San Francisco with my family between March and April, the peak of the fishing season when the sea is calmest.

Preserved coral

We have been spending the Holy Week there for several

years now. It is a time when the moon is full and, according to the common wisdom, when sea urchins are at their juiciest.

My children have spent happy days snorkeling in Punta, like I did when I was a kid myself.

Much of the coral along the shores of San Francisco were destroyed in the 1960s and 1970s when dynamite fishing was routinely employed.

This was how Albino, one of our neighbors, lost a leg. "Ma-Albino ka," the elders would often warn those who continued with the destructive practice.

Protected areas

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I still remember the hours I spent with my father just watching the fish weave in and out of the coral, just as I cherish the delight of my son-in seeing a baby octopus changing its colors as it swims by.

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Dear departed

But I don't think my children will still be able to snorkel in Punta's waters this Holy Week. There will be no Lolo Pater and Lola Peling to prepare the lunch they will eat on the beach.

Tiya Melia, who often looked after my children when they were there, and Manong Maying, who supplied our daily dose of *kinalaw*, will have relocated by then.

And there is nowhere we can wash away the salt after swimming for hours in the sea. The water-impounding pond that the villagers had built is gone.

There the women used to gather every morning to wash their clothes and exchange gossip. The water, drawn directly from the mountain, was soothingly cool and clean.

Punta is reputed to have one of the best sources of water in San Francisco. But the mountain, the source of Punta's water that nourished the people who lived there for generations, also became the cause of their death.

Mass grave

The Panaon Institute, the high school in the town center, will have to look for another principal to replace my cousin, Renee Subang Paug, who perished together with her family that night. She was one of my playmates.

Some of the Subang kids will not be present at the school graduation. (Being a big clan, we had children in almost all the grade levels, and we were always updated on who finished the school year with honors.)

But at least my cousin Eddie is assured that his parents' bodies have been found. The municipality has prepared a mass grave for the dead.

Responsibility

On the shoulders of Ricky, the clan's barangay captain, lies the responsibility of organizing the survivors.

Ricky has helped many of his cousins build their homes (and that includes our own in Fairview, Quezon City).

When we spoke on the phone Saturday morning, he sounded incoherent at first, apparently still in shock at seeing so many of our clan members buried in the mud. But as I coaxed him to identify the dead and the missing—for the benefit of other relatives living in Manila—I knew that he, together with our other cousins who survived the ordeal, will be able to carry on.

And when I called again last Sunday, I was told that Ricky had gathered his workers and started mass-producing coffins for our dead.

Building, shattered lives

Hopefully, Ricky will soon be rebuilding his own home. Once we have buried all of our dead, we will have to start helping one another reconstruct shattered lives—the children who have been orphaned, the parents who have lost their children.

For the whole families who died together that night, I take comfort in the thought that nobody among them has to live through the trauma.

This is indeed a tragic Christmas for us. But I am confident that this clan will rise above the tragedy.

Floods displace 4,270 families in Surigao Sur

LANUZA, Surigao del Sur—Linda Armendarez went fishing in a river to put food on the table—and ended up dead.

Florencio Pimentel Jr., chief of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC), said Armendarez, 62, braved the heavy rain but the rampaging waters of the Lanuza River swept her away.

Four other people were washed away by rivers in the province. The PDCC identified them as Viviana Jabagaton of Hinatuan town, Danilo Bation of Marihatag, Marlon Sullano of Madrid, and Kevin Papa of Tandag.

Godofredo Cabrera, Leonardo Talagud and Nickenley Siyaton, all from Barangay Diatagon in

Lianga town, were reported missing.

Pimentel said some 4,270 families in Surigao del Sur had been displaced by floods.

The PDCC initially put the damage to infrastructure, livestock and crops in Surigao del Sur at P45 million.

The week-long rains have inundated farm lands, forcing farmers to move to higher ground.

In Tago town, fishing boats, now numbering about 80, have become the mode of transportation.

The Regional Disaster Coordinating Council in the Caraga region said the death toll had risen to 23, with two persons in Agusan del Sur still missing and seven

others injured in the landslide in Surigao City.

Of that number, 15, including two infants, were victims of the landslide; eight died of drowning.

Jabonga, the worst-hit town in Agusan del Norte, remains without electricity and water.

More floods

In South Cotabato, three persons perished while hundreds of families fled their homes in General Santos City and Sarangani province because of flash floods and landslides.

A late report reaching General Santos said Fulong Dani and his wife, Nga No Tamanggong, were swept away while crossing a river in Lamhaku in T'boli town Friday

night. Their bodies were recovered the next day.

In Sitio Datal Imboyong, Barangay Lambuyong, also in T'boli, a farmer identified only as Ma Nok was on his way home when a landslide buried him alive.

The South Cotabato government ordered heightened monitoring of Lake Holon (formerly Maughan) in T'boli after receiving reports that the water was rising to a critical level.

Floods were likewise reported in Balingasag, Misamis Oriental, and in Davao City. Bert Pacate, Ma. Kristina E. Cassion, Edwin O. Fernandez, Anthony S. Allada, Grace Cantal-Albasin and Aquiles Z. Zonito, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Hardest-hit village may be turned into a cemetery

From page A1

Amarga said the foul odor was so overwhelming that he and other local officials feared it might cause health problems among those involved in the operations.

He said they have officially placed the death toll at 103, with 71 bodies recovered. Many of the bodies were buried in a mass grave.

Southern Leyte Vice Gov. Eva Tomol said the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council had even recommended that the residents of Punta and Barangay Pinutan in San Ricardo town be relocated because the bodies buried in the mud might contaminate the water supply and trigger an epidemic.

"It's our presumption that there are a lot of unrecovered bodies [in Punta and Pinutan], so it is not healthy for people to live there. They have no water because the ground water will be contaminated by the rotting bodies of animals and people," Tomol said.

GMA's visit

President Macapagal-Arroyo and some members of the Cabinet flew to San Francisco yesterday morning to condole with the bereaved families and to distribute relief goods.

The President gave P20,000 in burial assistance to the families of the fatalities in Punta as well as in two other villages in the towns of Liloan and San Ricardo that were also hit by flash floods and mudslides.

She also provided financial assistance to the families of three persons killed in the flash flood in Maasin City, Southern Leyte.

The President went to the parish church, which is being used as distribution center for relief goods as well as temporary shelter for a number of dislocated families.

She also visited the gymnasium where the remains of the three killed in Maasin were lying.

Plant fruit trees

In her brief message at the church, Ms. Macapagal ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to rehabilitate the mountains of Liloan, San Francisco and San Ricardo.

She said fruit trees should be planted between the coconut trees abundant in the mountains of the three municipalities.

Ms Macapagal assured the affected families that the government would provide them a relocation site should they decide not to return to their village.

She said it might not be safe for them to return because it is possible another landslide might occur.

Time of compassion

Earlier in Malacañang, the President called on the people to be charitable to the victims of the flash floods and landslides in Southern Leyte.

"This is a time of compassion, charity and sharing. I ask the people to support the various fund drives aiming to raise assistance for the victims and the dislocated," she said in a statement issued before she flew to San Francisco.

According to her spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, the President flew to Surigao City before proceeding by helicopter to the worst-hit areas.

"I am mobilizing all the available resources of the government to bear upon this disaster, and I call upon our people to open up their compassion and generosity to the victims," Ms Macapagal said.



THE ABANDONED village of Punta, San Francisco in Southern Leyte, where 46 houses were buried and 80 bodies recovered. Residents refuse to return to the ghostly village.

VAL HANDUMON



PRESIDENT Macapagal visits landslide victims in San Francisco, Panaon Island, with US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias and DENR Secretary Eliza Gozun.

VAL HANDUMON

She also aired the assurance that humanitarian workers would continue to work to help the affected communities even during the Christmas holidays.

"The celebration of Christmas takes a back seat for many rescue and humanitarian workers, who will continue day and night to perform their duties," she said.

Body count

Vice Governor Tomol, acting PDCC chair, said that based on a report from the Philippine Army, five bodies had been recovered and 20 others remained missing in Pinutan.

The operation center based in the Provincial Capitol in Maasin earlier reported that 77 bodies had been retrieved in the village.

Tomol said the confusion in the figures stemmed from the varied information relayed by different groups to her office. The figures could not be confirmed immediately because the road leading to Pinutan remained impassable.

There were about 20 landslides between Barangay Esperanza and Pinutan alone, preventing local officials from bringing food and relief goods to the victims.

Bayanihan spirit

Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias said that while the tragedy had brought pain and suffering, it also showed that the bayanihan spirit was very much alive among Filipinos.

She said this could be seen in the assistance extended by others to the affected towns, and the donations and expressions of support from many private citizens and groups, local government units in Samar and Leyte, and even foreign governments.

The US government has given P3 million as well as food, clothing and medicine. (Story on Page A1.)

The Associated Press quoted US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone as saying that his government was sending a C-130 transport plane with emergency supplies, including ready-to-eat meals, medical supplies and clothing, later yesterday.

The aircraft will also carry Philippine Red Cross supplies, including tents and plastic sheets, from Manila to Leyte, he said.

Also yesterday, Japan sent a shipment of humanitarian goods and equipment worth about \$145,500, the embassy in Manila said.

The Cebu City government and the Cebu Jaycees Inc. have put up a center at the Fuente Osmeña Rotunda to accept donations. A hotline number—(032) 255-2260—has been installed to receive pledges.

Water supply

The Department of Health has sent a nine-member team to the disaster areas to check on the water supply, treat the injured and

help families identify their dead.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said the DOH team, composed of epidemiologists, orthodontists and surgeons, visited Liloan first on Saturday before proceeding to Punta.

He appealed to grieving families to immediately bury their dead to prevent the incidence of infectious diseases.

Dayrit said the water system had been damaged by the mudslides, and the residents were getting their water from deep wells.

Contamination

He said that while local engineers had made the assurance that the deep wells were protected sources, the DOH team was still making sure that these were not contaminated.

"A problem will arise only if the corpses are contaminating the water supply," Dayrit said in an interview yesterday at the DOH central office in Manila.

He said the DOH also wanted to make sure that proper hygiene was being observed in the evacuation centers, and that there were toilet facilities.

"As long as the water is properly taken care of, as long as there's proper hygiene, they will be able to survive this period," Dayrit said. With reports from Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau; Juliet Labog-Javellana and Blanche S. Rivera in Manila; AP

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Tiya Melia, who often looked after my children when they were there, and Manong Maying, who supplied our daily dose of *kinalaw*, will have relocated by then.

And there is nowhere we can wash away the salt after swimming for hours in the sea. The water-impounding pond that the villagers had built is gone.

There the women used to gather every morning to wash their clothes and exchange gossip. The water, drawn directly from the mountain, was soothingly cool and clean.

Punta is reputed to have one of the best sources of water in San Francisco. But the mountain, the source of Punta's water that nourished the people who lived there for generations, also became the cause of their death.

Mass grave

The Panaon Institute, the high school in the town center, will have to look for another principal to replace my cousin, Renee Subang Paug, who perished together with her family that night. She was one of my playmates.

Some of the Subang kids will not be present at the school graduation. (Being a big clan, we had children in almost all the grade levels, and we were always updated on who finished the school year with honors.)

But at least my cousin Eddie is assured that his parents' bodies have been found. The municipality has prepared a mass grave for the dead.

Responsibility

On the shoulders of Ricky, the clan's barangay captain, lies the responsibility of organizing the survivors.

Ricky has helped many of his cousins build their homes (and that includes our own in Fairview, Quezon City).

When we spoke on the phone Saturday morning, he sounded incoherent at first, apparently still in shock at seeing so many of our clan members buried in the mud. But as I coaxed him to identify the dead and the missing—for the benefit of other relatives living in Manila—I knew that he, together with our other cousins who survived the ordeal, will be able to carry on.

And when I called again last Sunday, I was told that Ricky had gathered his workers and started mass-producing coffins for our dead.

Building, shattered lives

Hopefully, Ricky will soon be rebuilding his own home. Once we have buried all of our dead, we will have to start helping one another reconstruct shattered lives—the children who have been orphaned, the parents who have lost their children.

For the whole families who died together that night, I take comfort in the thought that nobody among them has to live through the trauma.

This is indeed a tragic Christmas for us. But I am confident that this clan will rise above the tragedy.

Floods displace 4,270 families in Surigao Sur

LANUZA, Surigao del Sur—Linda Armendarez went fishing in a river to put food on the table—and ended up dead.

Florencio Pimentel Jr., chief of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC), said Armendarez, 62, braved the heavy rain but the rampaging waters of the Lanuza River swept her away.

Four other people were washed away by rivers in the province. The PDCC identified them as Viviana Jabagaton of Hinatuan town, Danilo Batian of Marihatag, Marlon Sullano of Madrid, and Kevin Papa of Tandag.

Godofredo Cabrera, Leonardo Talagud and Nickenley Siyaton, all from Barangay Diatagon in

Liang town, were reported missing.

Pimentel said some 4,270 families in Surigao del Sur had been displaced by floods.

The PDCC initially put the damage to infrastructure, livestock and crops in Surigao del Sur at P45 million.

The week-long rains have inundated farm lands, forcing farmers to move to higher ground.

In Tago town, fishing boats, now numbering about 80, have become the mode of transportation.

The Regional Disaster Coordinating Council in the Caraga region said the death toll had risen to 23, with two persons in Agusan del Sur still missing and seven

others injured in the landslide in Surigao City.

Of that number, 15, including two infants, were victims of the landslide; eight died of drowning.

Jabonga, the worst-hit town in Agusan del Norte, remains without electricity and water.

More floods

In South Cotabato, three persons perished while hundreds of families fled their homes in General Santos City and Sarangani province because of flash floods and landslides.

A late report reaching General Santos said Pulong Dani and his wife, Nga No Tamanggong, were swept away while crossing a river in Lamhaku in T'boli town Friday

night. Their bodies were recovered the next day.

In Sitio Datal Imboyong, Barangay Lambuyong, also in T'boli, a farmer identified only as Ma Nok was on his way home when a landslide buried him alive.

The South Cotabato government ordered heightened monitoring of Lake Holon (formerly Maughan) in T'boli after receiving reports that the water was rising to a critical level.

Floods were likewise reported in Balingasag, Misamis Oriental, and in Davao City. Bert Pacate, Ma. Kristina E. Cassion, Edwin O. Fernandez, Anthony S. Allada, Grace Cantal-Albasin and Aquiles Z. Zonia, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Hardest-hit village may be turned into a cemetery

From page A1

Amarga said the foul odor was so overwhelming that he and other local officials feared it might cause health problems among those involved in the operations.

He said they have officially placed the death toll at 103, with 71 bodies recovered. Many of the bodies were buried in a mass grave.

Southern Leyte Vice Gov. Eva Tomol said the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council had even recommended that the residents of Punta and Barangay Pinutan in San Ricardo town be relocated because the bodies buried in the mud might contaminate the water supply and trigger an epidemic.

"It's our presumption that there are a lot of unrecovered bodies [in Punta and Pinutan], so it is not healthy for people to live there. They have no water because the ground water will be contaminated by the rotting bodies of animals and people," Tomol said.

GMA's visit

President Macapagal-Arroyo and some members of the Cabinet flew to San Francisco yesterday morning to condole with the bereaved families and to distribute relief goods.

The President gave P20,000 in burial assistance to the families of the fatalities in Punta as well as in two other villages in the towns of Liloan and San Ricardo that were also hit by flash floods and mudslides.

She also provided financial assistance to the families of three persons killed in the flash flood in Maasin City, Southern Leyte.

The President went to the parish church, which is being used as distribution center for relief goods as well as temporary shelter for a number of dislocated families.

She also visited the gymnasium where the remains of the three killed in Maasin were lying.

Plant fruit trees

In her brief message at the church, Ms. Macapagal ordered the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to rehabilitate the mountains of Liloan, San Francisco and San Ricardo.

She said fruit trees should be planted between the coconut trees abundant in the mountains of the three municipalities.

Ms Macapagal assured the affected families that the government would provide them a relocation site should they decide not to return to their village.

She said it might not be safe for them to return because it is possible another landslide might occur.

Time of compassion

Earlier in Malacañang, the President called on the people to be charitable to the victims of the flash floods and landslides in Southern Leyte.

"This is a time of compassion, charity and sharing. I ask the people to support the various fund drives aiming to raise assistance for the victims and the dislocated," she said in a statement issued before she flew to San Francisco.

According to her spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, the President flew to Surigao City before proceeding by helicopter to the worst-hit areas.

"I am mobilizing all the available resources of the government to bear upon this disaster, and I call upon our people to open up their compassion and generosity to the victims," Ms Macapagal said.



THE ABANDONED village of Punta, San Francisco in Southern Leyte, where 46 houses were buried and 80 bodies recovered. Residents refuse to return to the ghostly village.

VAL HANDUMON



PRESIDENT Macapagal visits landslide victims in San Francisco, Panaon Island, with US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Leras and DENR Secretary Eliza Gozun.

VAL HANDUMON

She also aired the assurance that humanitarian workers would continue to work to help the affected communities even during the Christmas holidays.

"The celebration of Christmas takes a back seat for many rescue and humanitarian workers, who will continue day and night to perform their duties," she said.

Body count

Vice Governor Tomol, acting PDCC chair, said that based on a report from the Philippine Army, five bodies had been recovered and 20 others remained missing in Pinutan.

The operation center based in the Provincial Capitol in Maasin earlier reported that 77 bodies had been retrieved in the village.

Tomol said the confusion in the figures stemmed from the varied information relayed by different groups to her office. The figures could not be confirmed immediately because the road leading to Pinutan remained impassable.

There were about 20 landslides between Barangay Esperanza and Pinutan alone, preventing local officials from bringing food and relief goods to the victims.

Bayanihan spirit

Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Leras said that while the tragedy had brought pain and suffering, it also showed that the bayanihan spirit was very much alive among Filipinos.

She said this could be seen in the assistance extended by others to the affected towns, and the donations and expressions of support from many private citizens and groups, local government units in Samar and Leyte, and even foreign governments.

The US government has given P3 million as well as food, clothing and medicine. (Story on Page A1.)

The Associated Press quoted US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone as saying that his government was sending a C-130 transport plane with emergency supplies, including ready-to-eat meals, medical supplies and clothing, later yesterday.

The aircraft will also carry Philippine Red Cross supplies, including tents and plastic sheets, from Manila to Leyte, he said.

Also yesterday, Japan sent a shipment of humanitarian goods and equipment worth about \$145,500, the embassy in Manila said.

The Cebu City government and the Cebu Jaycees Inc. have put up a center at the Fuente Osmeña Rotunda to accept donations. A hotline number—(032) 255-2260—has been installed to receive pledges.

Water supply

The Department of Health has sent a nine-member team to the disaster areas to check on the water supply, treat the injured and

help families identify their dead.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said the DOH team, composed of epidemiologists, orthodontists and surgeons, visited Liloan first on Saturday before proceeding to Punta.

He appealed to grieving families to immediately bury their dead to prevent the incidence of infectious diseases.

Dayrit said the water system had been damaged by the mudslides, and the residents were getting their water from deep wells.

Contamination

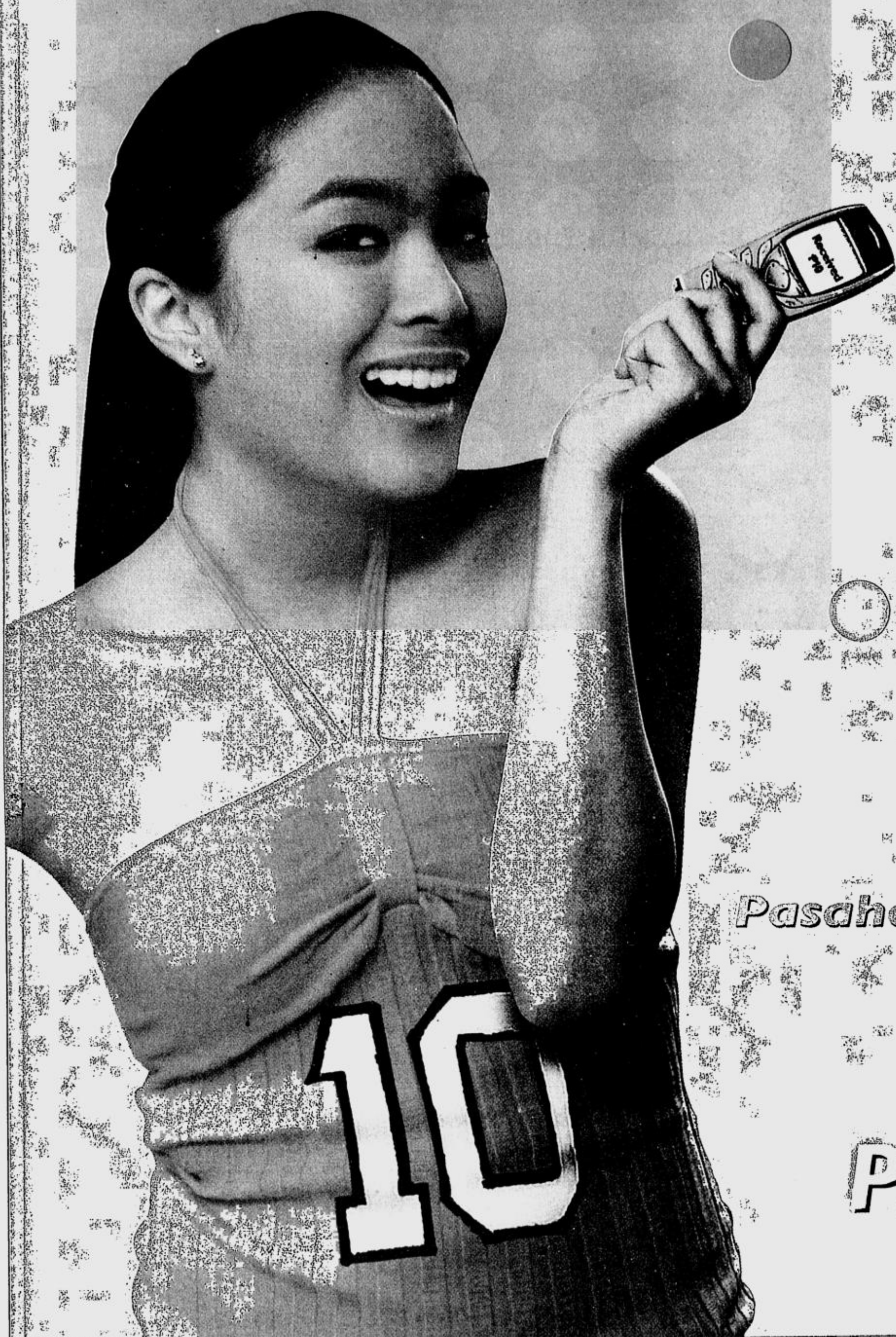
He said that while local engineers had made the assurance that the deep wells were protected sources, the DOH team was still making sure that these were not contaminated.

"A problem will arise only if the corpses are contaminating the water supply," Dayrit said in an interview yesterday at the DOH central office in Manila.

He said the DOH also wanted to make sure that proper hygiene was being observed in the evacuation centers, and that there were toilet facilities.

"As long as the water is properly taken care of, as long as there's proper hygiene, they will be tided over this period," Dayrit said. With reports from Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau; Juliet Rober-Javellana and Blanche S. Rivera in Manila; AP

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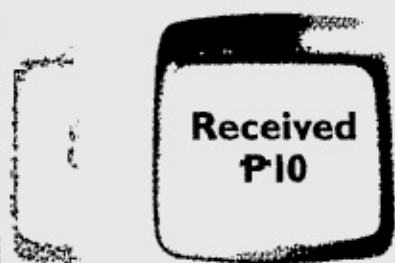
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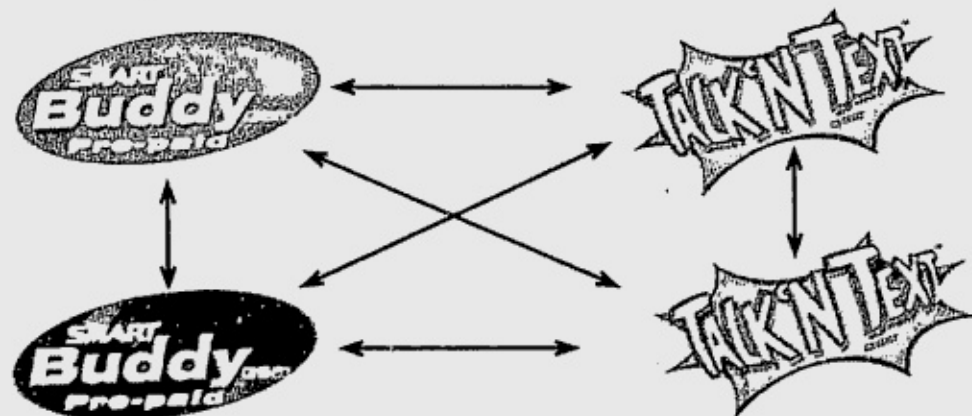
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Singing of angels

POPE John Paul II has urged Christians to prepare themselves spiritually as they celebrate the birth of the Christ Child. "While the last touches are put on the Nativity scene and on the Christmas tree," the Pope told pilgrims gathered at St. Peter's Square Sunday, "it is necessary to prepare the soul to intensely live this great mystery of faith."

To understand the real meaning of **EDITORIAL** Christmas, he said, they should look up to Mary who demonstrated its key elements: humility, silence, amazement and joy. "She indicates to us the value of silence, which knows how to listen to the singing of angels and the wailing of the Child, not stifling them in din and confusion. Together with her, we will pause before the Nativity scene with quite amazement, savoring the simple and pure joy that the Child brings to humanity."

That message has, of course, been repeated time and again with the coming of Advent. But we wonder if many people really listen. For the reality is that the focus of our celebrations has shifted to feasting, merry-making and gift giving and receiving. Amid the chaos of traffic and the frenzy of shopping, people tend to forget the reason for the celebration which is the birth of the Savior. Most of us, it seems, have lost our sense of wonder and amazement over this joyful mystery that begins the story of redemption.

Bringing Christ back to the center of the celebration can be tough, as the Catholic hierarchy must have discovered. In what looks almost like an act of desperation, the Catholic Church in the Philippines has even brought some of its solemn rituals to the centers of commerce. Nobody cares to remember when the practice began, but for several years now, for example, one can go to the malls for the Simbang Gabi during the nine days preceding Christmas. Sure it makes the term sound right: the Simbang Gabi is really held at night. And it even makes attendance almost as convenient as picking up a snack at a Seven-11 outlet.

But something is lost in the translation, and it is that wonderful thing called tradition. Going to Mass at the end of a day-long shopping expedition just doesn't feel as good as waking up on cold December mornings, dressing up and going to church with the whole family and coming home to partake of *bibingka* and *puto bumbong*, like many families happily still do. It may be Christianity made easy, but there are better ways of strengthening and enlivening one's faith and deepening one's spiritual life.

Mary's humility, silence, amazement and joy, which the Pope wants all the faithful to emulate, are the key to a meaningful celebration of Christ's birth. But amid the lights and the glitter, the hustle and bustle of the season, rarely can they be found except among the children. They are the happy ones. They are the lucky ones. Unless we become as little children and rediscover the capacity to enjoy simple things as well as God's wonders, we will not be able to hear "the singing of angels."

Iraq's reconstruction

THE ANXIETY that the Saddam regime might be revived, bringing with it another reign of terror, had discouraged Iraqis from making an effort to rebuild their home country. We hope that the Iraqi people, now freed of this fear, will devote themselves to reconstructing their country.

However, it is too early to be complacent about the news of Saddam's arrest.

FOREIGN COMMENT While one source of horror has been removed, terrorists will continue to seek out chances to ply their dark trade throughout the length and breadth of the vast territory of Iraq. Therefore, it is premature to say that the capture of Saddam will put a complete end to insurgency.

We would like to see an improvement in public order and progress in reconstruction develop and go forth in unison, just like the wheels of a car.

In postwar Iraq, unemployment is high partly because of the slow progress in reconstruction. Observers say the slow improvement in public order is due to the Iraqi people freely voicing their frustration with the Coalition Provisional Authority and other aid organizations. To remedy this, these organizations must do their utmost to increase employment opportunities among other things.

Yomiuri Shimbun (Tokyo)



From ballot-box snatching to diskette switching

As I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz



FPJ and APJ met last week to plan the political platform of the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP), the coalition of opposition political parties: the LDP, the KMP and the PDP-Laban. FPJ is you-know-who, and APJ is Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., one of the four candidates being considered as FPJ's running mate.

The starting point of the planning was APJ's own platform with the acronym of Freedom, which stands for Federalism, Reforms, Economy, Education, Debt, Overseas Filipinos, and Mindanao. (They were explained in this column last week.) Pimentel told the Kapihan sa Manila last Monday that FPJ accepted all the parts of the platform except federalism, which he suggested should be submitted as a part of the proposal to amend the Constitution so that it could be explained, discussed and dissected more fully for the benefit of the people. (Federalism is a system of government like those of the United States and Germany where the states are semi-autonomous.) The other parts of the platform were accepted "subject to refinement by FPJ's platform committee."

Pimentel then recommended that the other parts of the Freedom platform include the following:

"Reforms in policies on tax, anti-corruption, Armed Forces, police (law and order), environment, among other things;

"Economic policies to create an attractive business climate so that business can provide jobs for the people;

"Education policies to look back at the past and affirm sacred historical values of the people; look at the present to take stock of the youth and prepare them for citizenship and leadership roles; and look at tomorrow to make them competitive in a globalized economy;

"Debt policies to restructure the national debt servicing; prevent over-borrowing to enable the government to deliver basic services to the people;

"Overseas Filipino policies to empower them with a bigger role in the use of Owva funds and in government that concern them;

"Mindanao policies to bring peace to Min-

danao; develop the full potential of Mindanao in agriculture and aquaculture as well as in industrial development; and give Mindanao a fair share in the resources of the nation so that it may address the grievances of Moros and other tribal sectors there."

Pimentel said that Freedom is not meant to be an exclusive platform upon which the opposition parties can unite. Other opposition groups may add to it. "Freedom," he said, "is just a seminal basket of ideas defining a vision for the new administration."

It is understood that Freedom does not limit FPJ's program of action that his group may craft for the good of the people.

As far as Pimentel is concerned, the elections are over, with FPJ as the winner. FPJ is "parang bagyo," he said, that will blow rivals away, or bury them in a landslide of votes.

How about Ping Lacson? If he insists on running, he will take away opposition votes from FPJ.

If Ping runs, Pimentel replied, he will marginalize himself. He will not make a big dent on FPJ's votes. He can play an important role in an FPJ administration if he supports the coalition ticket. But if he insists on running, he would be defeated and, like an old soldier, just fade away. Worse, if GMA wins, her administration will continue to persecute him.

How about Bro. Eddie Villanueva, who is reputed to have five million followers?

He will take votes away from GMA because he used to be her supporter. Besides, history has shown that religious leaders don't win elections, starting with Gregorio

Aglipay, founder of the Aglipayan Church, who ran for president during Quezon's time and lost miserably.

Isn't Brother Eddie's candidacy, a violation of the constitutional provision on the separation of Church and State?

No. Even Cardinal Sin or Eraño Manalo can run for president if they want to. There is no prohibition. The question is: Will they win?

Isn't the "separation" provision meant to prevent religious groups from meddling in government?

That constitutional provision was put there in reaction to the meddling of the Spanish friars in government during the Spanish regime, but more to prevent government from putting up its own church or religious organization.

If a religious leader becomes president, won't we end up like Iran whose government is run by the ayatollahs who abuse their powers? Or like Spain during the Spanish Inquisition when alleged "heretics" were persecuted and even executed?

Possible but not likely.

Pimentel is more afraid of the computerized counting of ballots than of Filipino ayatollahs ruling the nation. With manual counting, we used to have ballot-box snatching and ballot switching. With computerization, we may have diskette switching, he said.

The computers, he pointed out, are not connected to the Comelec headquarters in Manila. They stand alone and independent of other computers. The results are recorded in diskettes which are then shipped to the Comelec's main office where they are tallied. It is thus very easy to snatch the genuine diskettes and substitute fake ones pre-programmed to make certain candidates win.

Pimentel suggested that Namfrel and party watchers be allowed to accompany the diskettes from the municipal halls to their final destination.

They say that with computerized counting, watchers won't be necessary. On the contrary, Pimentel said, they are needed more than ever to watch the diskettes.

Bowling for Columbine

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



MICHAEL Moore, for those who watched the Oscar Awards this year, was the chubby fellow who threw his audience into an uproar by shouting, "Shame on you, Mr. Bush," while receiving his award for best documentary. Bush had just invaded Iraq then. Moore's documentary is "Bowling for Columbine," and if you watch it (which you should; it is available in DVD in your favorite, ah, video shops), you will know why he said it.

Columbine is the name of the high school in Littleton, Colorado, where two boys went on a killing spree one fine day in April 1999. By the time it ended, 12 students, one teacher and the two boys themselves lay dead. That is where "Bowling for Columbine" takes off. It probes the causes of that mayhem.

In one brilliant moment there, Moore interviews an official of Lockheed Martin, the biggest weapons maker in America, whose plant in Littleton is the town's main employer and whose logo is "We are Columbine." The official expresses shock that the Columbine shooting could happen in America and asks, "Why would kids do this?" He himself suggests that the kids are probably angry at many things, which can be solved by anger-management programs.

Moore asks him if it is not possible that the kids who see their parents go to work building missiles at Lockheed do not think there's any difference between the mass destruction those weapons wreak and the one that happened at Columbine High School. The official is agast. The missiles they make, he says, are made for defense. "We don't get irritated with somebody, and just 'cause we're mad at them drop a bomb, shoot at them, or fire a missile at them."

Next follows, to the tune of "What a Wonderful World," sung by Louis Armstrong, a footage showing:

"1953: US overthrows Prime Minister Mossadeq of Iran, installs Shah as dictator; 1954: US overthrows democratically-elected President Arbenz of Guatemala, 200,000 civilians killed; 1963: US helps assassinate South Vietnamese President Diem; 1963-1975: US military kills 4 million people in Vietnam War;

Sept. 11, 1973: US stages coup in Chile, President Salvador Allende assassinated, dictator Augusto Pinochet installed, 5,000 Chileans murdered; 1977: US backs military leaders of El Salvador, 70,000 Salvadorans die; 1980s: US trains Osama bin Laden to kill Soviets, CIA gives him \$3 billion;

1981: Reagan administration trains and funds 'Contras,' 30,000 Nicaraguans die; 1982: US gives millions in aid to Saddam Hussein for weapons to kill Iraqis; 1983: White House secretly gives Iran weapons to kill Iraqis; 1989: Manuel Noriega, Panama president and CIA agent, disobeys orders from Washington, US invades Panama and removes Noriega, 3,000 Panamanians die; 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait with weapons from US; 1991: US enters Iraq; 1998: Clinton bombs 'weapons factory' in Sudan, factory turns out to be making aspirin; 1991 till Iraq war: American planes bomb Iraq on a weekly basis, UN estimates 500,000 Iraqi children die from bombing and sanctions; 2000-2001: US gives Taliban-ruled Afghanistan \$245 million in aid; 9/11: Bin Laden uses his expert CIA training to murder 3,000 Americans."

It takes a Moore to drive home to Americans what has become patent to other people at this time: that the mayhem their country is wreaking upon the world is all of a piece with the mayhem it is wreaking upon itself. It draws from the same well, to a culture of violence characterized by a proliferation of arms. The arms are both a symptom and cause of the violence. Mainstream America's fear of "other people," from the American Indians, to the former slaves, to "unfriendly" countries, even to aliens from outer space, have driven its government

and citizens to acquire more and more weapons of mass destruction. The weapons themselves have created new fears that are met with more weapons of mass destruction. The right to bear arms has become the right to build an arsenal, or arms depot, at home.

The wonder of it, which "Bowling" tries to address, is why the connection is not patent to Americans. The Columbine massacre has been attributed to everything from the influence of punk rock to violent movies—the title of Moore's documentary satirizes that: why not attribute it as well to bowling since the two boys were bowling earlier that day?—except to the culture of violence amply embodied by America's obsession with arms.

In another brilliant moment, Moore takes a trip to Windsor, a Canadian city across the river from Detroit, and discovers that the last murder happened 15 or 20 years ago. This is so despite the fact that its residents watch the same violent movies as Americans, there is as much poverty in Canadian cities as in the US, and Canada is just as multiracial as the US. Windsor's residents have no problems leaving their doors and windows open most of the time, and cannot imagine why anyone would mug them or sneak into their houses with mayhem in mind. Clearly, the problem is not violent movies, or poverty, or the presence of minorities. So why is there too much violence in Detroit and too little in Windsor? They have very few guns in Windsor.

"Bowling" isn't just a documentary about the perils of guns, it is a documentary about the perils of the mentality that underlies guns. Or arms, or missiles, or other weapons of mass destruction—they are all of a piece. That was the reason Moore shouted "Shame on you, Mr. Bush!" at the Oscars ceremony.

Scratch the surface and you'll find little difference between the thinking that drove two juveniles in Littleton to massacre fellow students in their school and the group of juveniles at Washington to massacre thousands of people in another country.

Something to think about in this season of peace.

Nanay's favorite

HIGH BLOOD

Rodolfo A. Arizala

WE'D also like to know the concerns of the sixtysomething and above, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sit back, content that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

favorite goddaughter.

This Christmas ritual continued even after this goddaughter grew up to be a young lady, became a teacher and got married. Every Christmas, she was always in our house making "Mano po, Ninang" to Nanay. And Nanay as in the past would always give her her blessings, offer whatever food we had that Christmas Day and, of course, give her the 50-centavo aguinaldo.

I once asked Nanay why she was giving such a special treatment to this particular goddaughter of hers. Nanay's simple reply was that "Ling-ling" was her first goddaughter. She was baptized when Nanay was still single and barely 16 years old.

When Nanay was taken ill at the age of 90, I rushed home from my foreign posting to be by her side. My younger brother, two sisters and I took turns attending to her and keeping vigil over her night and day.

One bright June morning, there was a persistent knocking at our door. When I opened the door, a smiling old lady was standing before me. "Nasaan po si Ninang?" she asked.

Before I could answer, my sister was also at the door, and she hurried to tell me: "Ah! Kuya,

she is Ling-ling, the goddaughter of Nanay. Remember the little girl who always went to our house every Christmas Day to receive Nanay's blessings?"

We guided Ling-ling into the bedroom where Nanay was lying with her eyes closed.

"Nanay, here is your goddaughter Ling-ling," we told her. "Do you remember your goddaughter who, without fail, went to you every Christmas to ask for your blessings?"

Ling-ling held gently the frail bony hand of Nanay and placed it over her forehead and said: "Mano po, Ninang. I am Ling-ling your goddaughter."

Nanay tried to open her eyes, smiled faintly and whispered, "Ah, yes, Ling-ling. How are you?" Then she instructed us to give Ling-ling something to eat and drink.

But Ling-ling told her, "Ninang, thank you. I am still full. I bring you some fruits: apples and oranges. Eat them so that you will get well soon."

Ling-ling perhaps remembered that every time she came to our house on Christmas Day when she was still a little girl, Nanay always offered her something to eat. Then she (Ling-ling) would pick up an apple, orange and bunch of grapes.

Of all the many godchildren of Nanay, it was Ling-ling who never forgot her. She made it a point to be at Nanay's bedside when Nanay passed away. Ling-ling never forgot the spirit of love, peace and of sharing, remembering her Ninang although it was not Christmas.

It should be that way for all of us. Let us make every day Christmas Day.

Rodolfo A. Arizala is a retired Filipino diplomat.

For the children

BEFORE I went to Malacañang, a friend warned about what the Grade 6 pupil he was tutoring in Math had told him. After his class went on an excursion to the Palace, the child told his tutor, "Ang baho pala ng Malacañang."

The child could have been referring figuratively to allegations of corruption, but I decided that he was talking about the smell from the Pasig River whose condition seems to reflect our nation's. So I made sure that I had a handkerchief.

COMMENTARY

Junefe Gilig Payot

Institute on Church and Social Issues

Fortunately, the breeze was fresh that morning. The leaves of the huge balete tree swayed gently. The bahay kubo used for the barrio fiesta for President Bush was still standing on the tidy front lawn. Maybe they will be used again for the Malacañang Christmas parties. At the foot of the staircase leading to the Ceremonial Hall, on the left side, was a Belen with Baby Jesus "wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger." The whole place was decorated with green, red, golden yellow and silvery Christmas decorations. In the Ceremonial Hall itself was a huge Christmas tree. Only then did I realize that Christmas was only a couple of weeks away.

Some of my earliest memories of Christmas are not so pleasant. On my first experience with exchanging Christmas gifts in school when I was six, several excited faces, including mine, turned hysterical. Some of us got only a pack of bukayo (sugar-coated young coconut candy) or sampalok (tamarind) candy because they were all that some very poor classmates could afford. This scene was replayed each Christmas until I was in Grade 3.

The exchange of gifts in school introduced me to two realities of Philippine society: poverty and economic inequality.

However, from Grade 4 onwards, the hysterical crying during Christmas parties stopped because everyone was now able to buy gifts worth the value earlier agreed upon. And when I think about it now, it must have been because the poor pupils had dropped out. It was, after all, more expensive to enroll at the higher levels. Moreover, the diet of the poor pupils must have adversely affected their school performance. In other words, economic standing strongly determined who would go on to the higher levels even as primary and secondary education were supposed to be free.

Those were the Bagong Lipunan years of Ferdinand Marcos, but it remains true today.

My reminiscing was cut by the announcement of the President's arrival. Everyone had to stand up. The President was dressed in a long white silvery coat that blended well with the glittering Christmas decorations and the huge chandeliers.

When the program started, a woman beside me whispered to her companion, "Akala ko si Jolina ang maghohost ng ceremony" (I thought Jolina was going to host this ceremony), referring to the young celebrity who hosts "The Working President," a TV program where the various activities of the President are explained.

It was the Galing Pook Awards 2003 ceremonies. Now on its 10th year, the award is given to local government units (LGUs) that come up with programs showcasing excellence in local governance. Mayor Marides Fernando, whose husband wants to be vice president, came to receive the award for Marikina City. Magsaysay Awardee Mayor Jesse Robredo, a staunch supporter of Sen. Raul Roco, received the award for Naga City. Both cities were given the Award for Continuing Excellence (ACE) together with the provinces of Bulacan and Nueva Vizcaya.

There were several awardees that morning. But the LGU awardee that got the loudest applause was Barangay Tabok in Mandaue City, the only barangay that won an award. It won for putting in place a waterworks system that provides affordable potable water to the whole barangay. It would make a good story for a movie: how a lowly kapitán (barangay chairman) went to the Malacañang to receive an award from the President.

However, it was the Child-Friendly Local Governance of the town of Alicia, Isabela, that earned the most enthusiastic applause from me. It was not only chosen for one of the 10 trailblazing programs but was also given a Special Citation for Child Rights Local Governance by a representative from Unicef. Among its many projects are the "Piso Mo, Aral Ko" "Barya Mo, Buhay Ko," and the "Balik-Aral Expansion Program" aimed at enrolling all children of school age in public schools. The town also boasts not only of a zero backlog in classroom requirements but also of libraries and reading centers for children. Because of this, the dropout rate has dropped while the literacy rate has gone up.

Medical services, skills training and protection against abuse as well as opportunity to participate in community and government affairs are also provided in Alicia. Playground facilities were built in all barangays. And tackling the problem at a more fundamental level, the town is also pursuing family planning through a child spacing scheme.

To ensure the program's sustainability, the town passed ordinances for a 5- and 25-year children investment plan. Guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this second-class municipality has put the child at the center of its development program, a vision that is truly pioneering and that sets it apart from the other awardees. For the town, "Sa bata magsisimula ang pagbabago ng Pilipinas." That cannot be overemphasized.

All towns and cities ought to emulate this. It's time for the children to take the center stage in local governance and policies. They are our future. Hopefully, the recognition given to Alicia will contribute to this movement for child-centered and child-friendly development.

And what better time to start reflecting about this than the Christmas season? Christmas after all is about a Child.

THEY SAID

Needs saving most

"Among all areas of Filipino life, it is politics that needs most the saving presence of Christ."

—Jaime Cardinal Sin

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This time of year

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



BUT really, will going hungry this evening and foregoing the traditional midnight repast help feed the hungry, save the dead, or heal the survivors?

In many religions, Catholicism included, fasting and deprivation and even self-imposed punishment are seen as ennobling and purifying. Purging oneself of earthly desires, such as appetites for everything from food and wine to pleasures of the flesh, is seen as a short cut to sainthood, a way of emptying oneself to allow for room for more transcendent concerns.

I don't know, but in the days when fasting and abstinence were religiously observed, I never felt myself any purer or nobler. Instead, the practice only made eating seem all the more desirable, meat that much more delectable.

Besides which, I think penance, especially if done for the wrong reasons, seems only to be so much self-indulgence, an easy way out, however ironic, for those who cannot or will not do the more difficult stuff, which is confronting reality head on.

If our wish be to help bury the dead in dignity or provide food and shelter for the survivors, then by all means let's dip into our Christmas budgets and set aside amounts to donate to agencies to buy the needed body bags, coffins, or basic necessities.

Even better, if the pictures and scenes of unimaginable horror have instilled in us the resolve not to let such tragedies happen again, then let's marshal our forces and pressure our government agencies and officials to strictly enforce the law and go after whoever is responsible for these disasters.

WE don't need to postpone Christmas.

Indeed, tragedies that impact on the whole nation seem to call for even more reason for celebration. We need to pull ourselves together to find the will to change things, and being Filipinos, we seem able to do this only if we find a reason for getting together and having a good time. Which may explain our "happy" revolutions, the reason foreign journalists and observers have concluded that we are, as a whole, a shallow people.

I remember three years ago, as Christmas approached with no sign of the Erap impeachment trial ending anytime soon, anticipating the coming of the Christmas season with dread. A relative in advertising warned that once the lights were lit in shopping centers and major thoroughfares, "we Pinoys will forget everything and concentrate on Christmas."

I believed this so much I even raised the possibility, before the Zobel de Ayala brothers, no less, that the lights remain unlit on Ayala Avenue and the entire commercial center. The brothers demurred about having to bow to the wishes of their tenants, though the décor and glitter seemed more subdued that year. And we Filipinos managed somehow to pull together a Christmas celebration. And what do you know, come January and the vote against the opening of the second envelope, we were ready to spill out to the streets and pull off Edsa II.

WHY should this be happening at this time of year? we ask whenever something untoward happens 'round the holidays, as if fate and circumstance kept calendars and seasonal reminders.

The answer really is: Why not? Why shouldn't death come to visit on Christmas? Why should disasters postpone their visitation till after New Year?

The only reason we ask at all is that we are not ready. Our puny minds cannot make room for two contrasting emotions: sadness and joy, exultation and grief. Even if the awful truth is that the coin of life always has two sides, the bright coupled with the dark. We just need to learn to be equally accepting of both conditions, ready for whatever life will hand us.

A student's account of Christmas 1880

CHRISTMAS like Easter should be a time to be charitable to people who are far from charitable.

While reading the reviews page of an obscure academic journal recently, I wondered why reviews seem to bring out the worst in reviewers who are normally kind-hearted. One review panned the work of two foreign scholars who tried to make sense of present-day Philippine politics. Not content with that, the reviewer extended the scope and commented on my work complaining that I wasted my time and research on national heroes and the elite rather than focusing on the masses. It was a valid point but then why fault me for what I don't cover in my research? History as it now stands often deals with people who write or left some record of the past no matter how biased or self-serving. Naturally, the result are many gray areas—women, gays, children, the illiterate for example—who remain invisible in history.

Fortunately, there is a crop of young historians following the pioneering work of Reynaldo Ileto and now focusing on what he called "the underside of Philippine history." One wishes that their work will gain a wider non-academic audience and provide an alternative to mainstream history that dominates our textbooks and classrooms.

Looking for material on Christmases past, I realized that the historical record is truly skewed, that what survives in libraries and archives are at the very least the history of the literate. It will really take more effort to dig up the Christmas memories of the masses. It exists, of course, but documentation is difficult to find.

Since I used up all of my Rizal Christmas material, I turned to the newspaper columns of Felix Roxas (mayor of Manila from 1905 to 1917) because he wrote about Christmas 1880 when he was a student at the Ateneo Municipal in Intramuros. He mentions the *vacacion chica* or "small vacation" from Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, to Jan. 6, then known as the Feast of the Three Kings. The "long vacation," of course, was the summer break.

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo



Roxas, together with eight other Ateneo students, contributed to a fund that went into hiring a 17-man musical band to play from 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve to 2 a.m. on Christmas Day. The group met at Quiapo and proceeded to Intramuros, with the band playing music as they walked. Naturally, people looked at this well-dressed group. Today we would call them "ksp" or "kulang sa pansin," but the intention was to catch the attention of the *colegiales*. He wrote:

"Toward's 11 o'clock we returned to Quiapo to hear Mass in the suburb's church. However, since we had about an hour to wait, we passed by San Pedro Street (now Evangelista) to Don Ramon Genato's residence which was handsomely decorated and which housed a 'bouquet' of beautiful young ladies colorfully attired in *mestiza* dresses. We stopped to serenade them. The owner of the house returned our gallant gesture by inviting us to supper and to the ball that had been organized. Our band took turns with his orchestra, and the ball doubled its liveliness."

Christmas 1880 was memorable simply because it was here that Roxas experienced his first dance:

"I was 'broken in' in the art of dancing, which happened to the tune of *Las Orillas del Pasig*. My partner was Maria C., a gracious young family friend. That first dance was extremely pleasant. Holding a young lady prisoner in my arms—even for a few brief moments—was something I had not even dreamt of till then. During that dance—commonly called *café con leche* because it involved a temporary change of partners—I en-

countered other eyes, other faces and was driven half insane. I experienced something similar to that man who would find in all his dancing partners a treasure trove of beauty, a serious rival of Dulcinea the beautiful."

The rest of the narration is really juvenile and make today's teenagers laugh. Things have changed drastically since then. If one needed proof, my nieces do not think of classical allusions when they hear "Dulcinea," they think of a restaurant that serves pastries as well as *churros con chocolate*.

Church bells interrupted Roxas' first delirious dance and everyone rushed to midnight Mass in Quiapo: "The interior of [the church where the Nazarene is venerated] was splendidly adorned. The Belen, artistically arranged, was located at the main altar. The music and the songs of the choir excited the devotion of the faithful, who followed with Christian piety the different parts of this most solemn ceremony. During the elevation, and as if they had painstakingly rehearsed for it, the various music bands played the 'Royal March' until the priest turned and said, 'Ite missa est,' at which point each of the different bands played the tune they thought most appropriate."

"It was about 1:00 a.m. when we returned home. Stimulated by the scenes of that night, I found it hard to sleep. The memory of the lovely girls I had seen hovered over my teenaged soul. From that day on, I knew what love and beauty were like."

Christmas comes every year and our memories of it are often associated with people or events that are remotely religious. When we consciously look at memory and history, we see blind spots and we must be grateful that there are historians who work to correct this rather than complain about work they should be doing.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Christmas tradition worth continuing

MY Lolo Inngo is now in heaven but the Christmas tradition he started has survived. It started as a family tradition when my Lolo and Lola moved to this small village in Capitol Hills in the early '80s. They were already in their 60s. Most of their 13 children had finished schooling, had left home, started families of their own. Finally they were able to build their dream house near a golf course.

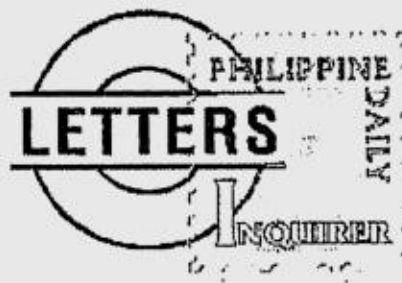
On Christmas Day, our family's former househelp would bring their children, mostly *inaanak* of the family, for Christmas breakfast and *pamasko*. They would come in their holiday finery and seek out their *ninong* and a "*mano po*" among us.

As was his wont, my Lolo Inngo goes out, even on Christmas morning, and jogs along the streets and outside the gates. He would meet up with kids from the surrounding areas, dressed up in their holiday clothes, out to greet their *ninong* and *ninang*. My Lolo would stop them and

point to a house (his house) and say to them: "*Doon sa bahay na yon may naminigay nang pamasko. May pagkain pa. Mag doorbell lang kayo.*" Lola gave them spaghetti and sandwiches and send them off with a goodies bag.

As the years passed, the number of children who came on Christmas Day grew to hundreds. My Lola, who by this time had organized a village homeowners' association, thought of passing on the tradition to the village itself.

Every year since then, Christmas Day is Alpha Village Children's Day for neighbors' kids in Capitol Hills. The Sisters at the Our Lady of Assumption host the children with a Christmas Day Mass and adoration of the Holy Child followed by an appropriate program on the true meaning of the day. Culminating the event is a distribution of goodies bags and a noisy and happy scramble for coins. I am sure my Lolo is smiling happily



ly looking down at the sight.

Would you like to participate in sharing a bit of cheer for the kids? Donations in cash and in kind even old toys and kids' clothing, fruits like apples and oranges will be most welcome. Just drop these at 10 Alpha Road or at the Novitiate at Omega Drive, Alpha Village, Capitol Hills, Quezon City. God bless you for your generosity.

—TALA SISON PASCUAL,
Community of Learners

Asphyxia caused fish kills in Zambales

THIS refers to the article titled, "Fish kill hits two towns in Zambales," (PDI, 12/5/03) which prompted fish pen and cage operators to hastily harvest their bangus.

May we inform you that the Environmental Management Bureau, in coordination with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Region 3 (BFAR R3) was able to issue Notices of Violation (NOV) to 31 fish cage owners within the Palauig and Masinloc Bays in Zambales. NOVs were issued because the fish cage owners did not secure an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) prior to operation from this office, which is in violation of Section 4 of Presidential Decree 1586 or the Philippine Environmental Impact Statement System Law and provisions of the DENR Administrative Order No. 42 and its implementing rules and regulations.

In a meeting with representatives from the BFAR R3 last Nov. 19, 2003, it was revealed that the Protected Areas Management Board (PAMB) approved a resolution on Feb. 26, 2003, which cancelled the permits/lease contracts issued to fish cage operators by the local government units (LGUs) and allowed the establishment and operations of the Mariculture at the Multiple Use Zone of the Masinloc Oyon Bay protected Seascape/Landscape. This office and the BFAR R3 agreed to meet with the PAMB in coming up with an action plan to address the said issue as well as implement the above-mentioned resolution. Also, NOVs will be issued to the new list of fish cage owners as provided by the representative of the BFAR R3.

On Nov. 27, 2003, the senior environmental management specialist and CENR officer of Masinloc, Zambales, conducted an inspection and collected water and sediment split samples delivered to NPC-Masinloc Laboratory and our laboratory for analysis. Results showed that water quality has improved from the date of fish kill incident. The BFAR also collected fish samples at the time of the incident and this office was informed that no deleterious substances measured and concluded that the fish kill was caused by asphyxia due to absence of oxygen in the water.

—LORMELYN E. CLAUDIO, regional director, Environmental Management Bureau, Regional Office 3, 4/F Mel-Vi Bldg., Olongapo-Gapan Road, Dolores, San Fernando, Pampanga

Compensation of Ayala execs going down

IN THE DEC. 22 issue of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the column Cocktales claimed that the aggregate compensation of Ayala's Top 5 executives steadily increased from P75.26 million in 2001 to P78.44 million in 2002 "even while the conglomerate's profits skidded from P5.11 billion in 1999 to P2.39 in 2002."

As a publicly listed company, we take great care in ensuring accuracy in our reported official business figures and facts and we demand as much from those who wish to write about the company and the manner in which we manage the business. It is for this reason that we would like to correct the erroneous figures on aggregate compensation of our Top 5 executives, including the chief executive officer for 2001 and 2002. The actual figure is P76.1 million and not P75.26 million in 2001 and P71.3 million and not P78.44 million in 2002, as reported in Victor Agustin's column. Consequently, instead of having steadily increased as you have stated, the aggregate compen-

sation of the Top 5 executives decreased by 6.31 percent from the 2001 aggregate compensation of P76.1 million as we have reported to the SEC.

Let me add the fact that from 1997 when the Asian crisis started to affect Philippine business in general, we have taken steps that actually resulted in the overall average downward trend in the various cost components of our business, including compensation.

We, therefore, deem it fair and reasonable to request you to rectify the statement about Ayala Corp. We believe that we owe it to the investing public to reflect what is true and correct in the spirit of responsible reporting and building the confidence in our business institution.

—RAMON FR MEDINA,
managing director,
Strategic Human Resources,
Ayala Corporation,
Makati Central PO Box 1444,
1254 Makati City

Poor writing skills in English

I HAVE observed that in our schools today, particularly in the high school level, students of English practice essay writing using not more than 200 words per page. The teachers assign the topic for their writing. Upon submission of the finished work, the teachers are usually appalled by the kind of writing and words used by the students.

Teachers find that today's students are full of ideas, but they find it hard to express what they really want to say and their choice of words makes their writing miserable. We may be able to

trace the root causes of such a dismal state to a lack of practice, a lack of knowledge in the basics of proper writing and ineffective teachers. The teachers should ask themselves if they are the ones to be blamed for the lack of teaching skills.

It would be a good idea if teachers today do not just accept, correct and evaluate the essays submitted, but also explain to the students their mistakes and how to correct them.

—BERNARD R. DE LUMEN,
bernies01126@yahoo.com

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US officials urge vigilance

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush met Monday with his top anti-terrorism advisors, one day after the US government raised its nationwide security level amid concerns of an impending domestic terrorist attack.

Bush convened a meeting of the Homeland Security Council, including officials from the Justice Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), after the domestic security threat level was raised Sunday from yellow, denoting an "elevated" risk of attack, to orange or "high" risk.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge told reporters after the White House meeting that Americans should not cancel holiday travel plans, but he urged all citizens to be vigilant for suspicious behavior. "If you've got holiday plans, go," Ridge urged.

"For national security reasons, we're not going to broadcast everything that we are doing," he said when asked what precautions were being taken to ward off a potential attack.

At Monday's meeting "we reviewed the specific plans and the specific action we have taken and will continue to take," Ridge said.

The Homeland Security Council, charged with protecting the United States against terrorist threats, was created by the White House in October 2001, and consists of representatives from the Defense Department, the Vice President's office, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Transportation Department, the Treasury Department, and other key agencies.

Ridge and other top officials said the threat of a devastating year-end attack by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network was the most serious since the terrorist strikes of Sept. 11, 2001.

In television broadcasts blanketing

NEWS ANALYSIS

Stephanie Griffith

US airwaves Monday, Ridge said terrorists appeared to be planning an attack on US territory (as opposed to overseas US interests) and could attempt to use airplanes to carry out a strike. That analysis, he said, came after reviewing recent monitored communications or "chatter" among terror groups. "It seems that more of the comments, more of the observations and expectations from these folks is directed internally to the United States, rather than interests abroad," Ridge told CBS television early Monday.

Security has been enhanced at the country's airports, border crossings, shopping centers and other sites where large crowds are likely to gather this week for holiday events.

Announcing the move Sunday, Ridge said terrorists hoped to "rival or exceed the scope and impact" of the Sept. 11 attacks, which left nearly 3,000 people dead.

Asked where the intelligence tips had originated, Ridge told CNN on Monday: "From many, many sources from around the world. Multiple sources, basically saying the same thing, talking about near-term attacks."

"And it's pretty clear that the nation's capital and New York city would be on any list," Ridge warned.

A senior US official said New York, Washington and Los Angeles were priority targets for the terror network and that the Christmas and New Year's holiday season was the time of highest threat.

John Pike, director of GlobalSecuri-

ty.org, which specializes in terrorist defense matters, said attacks of the type seen abroad could be launched in the United States. "Any of those are a possibility now," the terrorism expert explained. "We have to imagine a possibility of hijacking an executive jet or cargo plane, where the security is not as good as for commercial airplanes, and crashing them into nuclear facilities for instance."

The color-coded risk alert system had been at yellow, or "elevated" since May 30. Before that it had been at orange, or "high," for most of the time since its introduction. "High" is the second-most serious of five threat levels in the system.

Ridge told CBS television Monday that concerns of a terror attack had not yet reached the level to justify a code "red"—the highest level of alert. "If we simply go to red...it basically shuts down the country," he said. "We can't let threats keep us from being America."

The United States unleashed its global "war on terror" in response to the Sept. 11 hijacked plane attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and has completely upgraded security precautions since then.

In New York, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said the city had not raised its own threat level but had put additional security measures in place.

Although the country remained calm Monday, the effects of Ridge's warnings and the sight of extra national guardsmen and police on duty created some public jitters.

On the New York Stock Exchange, stocks dipped in early trading Monday on the back of terrorist fears, and in response to the government's decision to raise the security threat level.

AFP



FPJ and Ronald Reagan are worlds apart

I WRITE to express my disgust at the response of some leaders of Fernando Poe Jr. to voters' query why FPJ should be elected president since he is only a movie actor. These leaders, obviously to court the *masa*, say that the Americans elected actor Ronald Reagan as their president and ask the voters to elect "Da King" also as our president.

The people need to know that FPJ and Reagan are worlds apart.

FPJ is a high school drop-out. He is said to have managed his film company well. He never held any government or private executive post.

Reagan worked his way to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. He became a sportscaster and started a movie career which was interrupted by a 3-year service stint in the US Army. He became a popular TV host and then the spokesman of giant General Electric. Soon he was discussing

varied public issues, including government excesses and communism.

A powerful speaker on public matters, he won the governorship of California, the biggest state in the US, and served as such for two 4-year terms. He was a very popular governor when he ended his second term and left his state with more than \$5 billion in surplus.

Reagan traveled extensively in the lecture circuit throughout the United States where he expressed his political and economic views. He was elected for two terms as US president, with George Bush Sr. as his vice president.

I am ashamed that some FPJ supporters put him in the same class as Ronald Reagan and tell the voters to elect FPJ as our president.

—SILVERIO F. AQUINO,
29 Road 14, Project 8,
Quezon City

DAO 51 lowers emission levels unilaterally

ACCORDING to the 2002 World Bank Philippine Environment Monitor Report, health costs in 2001 from sickness brought about by air pollution in Metro Manila, Baguio City, Cebu City and Davao City alone reached US\$430 million, equivalent to 0.6 percent of the country's national gross domestic product.

The review estimated the yearly cost of exposure to polluted air in the four cities as follows: over 2,000 people die prematurely; over 9,000 people suffer from chronic bronchitis; and nearly 51 million cases of respiratory ailments.

Since the late 1980s, we have been advocating cleaner fuel and vehicle emissions in our fight against air pollution and its resulting effects such as global warming.

We forged the Health Air pact with the oil companies in 1993 to reduce lead in gasoline and sulfur in diesel. We passed Republic Act 8749 or the Clean Air Act in 1999 and ratified the Kyoto protocol this year to address climate change.

But last October 2003, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources issued Administrative Order No. 2003-51, lowering the allowed carbon monoxide emission of in-use vehicles for registration on or after Jan. 1, 2003 to only 3.5 percent by volume from the original 0.5 percent set by the Clean Air Act.

The implementation of the Clean Air Act suffered not only serious technical but also hazardous setbacks because of the dangerous inaccuracies committed by the DENR.

The Clean Air Act standards conform to Euro 1 levels—globally accepted emission standards that are based on the fuel injection catalytic converter system of present-day cars with oxygen sensors that reduce toxic exhaust gases.

The DENR insists that the 3.5 percent is based on Euro 1 levels. But this level is pre-Euro 1 and that the original 0.5 percent in the act is the correct Euro 1 level

being implemented in Europe and most countries in the world, including Asia—Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The Clean Air Act clearly mandates in Sec. 21 that the emission standards beginning January 2003 shall be based on the "Consolidated Emissions Directive 91/441/EEC," which was adopted by the UN Economic Council for Europe as ECE Regulation 83 and by the Council of Ministers of the European Community on June 26, 1991.

This "91/441/EEC" is in fact the mother document that sets the Euro 1 levels. Simply put, "91/441/EEC" is exactly the "Euro 1 level" that the Clean Air Act has adopted beginning 2003.

From the Clean Air Act's passage in 1999 to Dec. 31, 2002, car manufacturers were given a transition period to allow adjustments in fuel specifications, automotive emissions technology, and other preparations that would be required before full implementation on Jan. 1, 2003.

Now they got a reprieve from complying with the Clean Air Act when the DENR lowered the emission standards that Congress has set, at the expense of the environment and human health.

The department's mandate is to improve air quality and protect the environment. It went against its mandate when it signed DAO 51. And worse, they relaxed the emission standards indefinitely, setting our anti-air pollution program several steps backwards.

At a point when we are addressing so many concerns especially those directly affecting the poor like air pollution, this department failed to be the guardian of the environment. The DENR must be responsive to the needs of the people.

—HEHERSON T. ALVAREZ,
presidential adviser on
overseas Filipino communities,
Rm. 320 Tahanan ng Masa Bldg.,
JP Laurel St., Malacañang Compound,
San Miguel, Manila

Unadulterated hogwash

I WRITE to dispute the "reliable information" purveyed by Belinda Cunanan in her column last Dec. 15, regarding "conditions sought by the Lacson camp, in return for his sliding to No. 2."

The claim, heard also in political circles and spread by those who are pushing Fernando Poe Jr.'s candidacy, is pure and unadulterated hogwash. Neither Sen. Panfilo Lacson nor any of the few trusted men in his circle have initiated any talks with anyone in the direction of a political accommodation.

It took 17 days from the time Poe announced his availability for the presidency before he and Lacson sat down in a one-on-one meeting. Lacson did not go to that meeting offering any kind of compromise other than to get Poe to agree to a fair selection process, something his self-appointed political "handlers" never

gave the senator. Ask Poe if Lacson proposed anything other than that.

I am sure Cunanan, who claims her information was "reliable," can find some avenue to be able to get it straight from the horse's mouth instead of printing disinformation.

I have a faintly good idea of her "reliable" informant. It must be someone with whom she sups in the mansion of a common lady friend of ours. He is not in politics, although he rubs elbows with the politically powerful. Given Cunanan's perspicacity, I do not believe she would take the word of Poe's self-appointed spokespersons anyway. I assure her even her "grapevine" is an infected root.

—LITO BANAYO,
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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

**BREAK OF DAWN**

Dawn breaks as the faithful flock to the Sto. Rosario Church in Toril, Davao City to attend midnight Mass. Millions observe the Christmas tradition of attending midnight Mass to welcome the coming of Christmas Day.

RING GONZALES, PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

OFWs' 'one-stop' center set up in Clark ecozone

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Overseas Filipino workers, about five million out of eight million come from Northern Luzon's 22 provinces, got a big present this Christmas.

A one-stop center promising fast services in the processing of travel and work papers was opened on Dec. 18 for OFWs here by the Office of the Presidential Assistant for North Luzon.

Called the OFW One-Stop Shop, it is located at the Balikbayan Mall where the Department of Foreign Affairs consular office in Central Luzon operates.

The DFA, the Department of Labor and Employment, Professional Regulation Commission, National Telecommunications Commission, Philippine Overseas Employment Agency and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration have been tapped to establish the center, according to Presidential Assistant for North Luzon Renato Diaz.

He said the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Health, the Home Development Mutual Fund, National Bureau of Investigation, Philippine Health Insurance Corp., Na-

tional Statistics Office, the Social Security System, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority are also setting up field offices in Clark.

Diaz said these satellite offices in Clark would "provide the public a convenient location" from where they could get passports, visas, overseas employment certificates and artist record books.

He said plans were under way to put all these offices under one building or within a single district inside Clark. The plans include the construction of a playground where OFWs can leave their children while they have their documents processed.

Through the center, OFWs from Northern and Central Luzon need not travel to Manila to have their papers processed, Diaz said.

He said Clark is an "ideal jump-off point" for OFWs because it hosts the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport. "It's a more convenient and less costly entry and exit point for our people who work overseas," he said.

Diaz said the center is a "long-overdue reward for our OFWs." *Tonette Orejas, Central Luzon Desk*

GMA asked to help stop drop in sugar prices

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BAOLOC CITY—Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Maranon and Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra are appealing to President Macapagal-Arroyo to act to avert a sugar industry crisis following the drop in the prices of sugar.

If the crisis would not be prevented, he said the real victims in the end would be sugar workers.

"I appeal to the President to see to it that the situation does not worsen, and I call for prayers to prevent a crisis in the sugar industry," Navarra said.

Maranon said Ms. Macapagal should seriously address the problem of the sugar industry while there was still time.

He said despite efforts to diversify, the province still mainly relies on the sugar industry.

On Monday, Sugar Regulatory Administrator James Ledesma admitted that the sugar industry was entering into a crisis after the drop of sugar prices from P840 per 50-kilo-gram bag at the start of the milling season in October to P707 last week.

Sugar leaders earlier warned that if the price of sugar dropped below P700, it would be below production cost.

Leyte tragedy wakes Zambo folk to dangers of logging

COTABATO CITY—"We do not want the Leyte tragedy to happen in Zamboanga del Norte." With this message, the people of Dipolog City and Zamboanga del Norte protested what they described as 24-hour logging operations in the remaining virgin forests of Baliguian town.

Church leaders, non-government organizations and environmentalists have urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to take a look into their problem and order an immediate stop "so that our forest is saved."

They said the forest now is a virtual "mountain graveyard."

Michael Mallaca, an official of React Radio Club, an amateur radio group in Dipolog City, said Bishop Jose Manguiran has joined the people to express their opposition to the logging operations of David Consunji Corp. (Dacon).

"They (Dacon) have carved out new roads, cut trees of various species including the endangered almaciga, converted them into logs, brought (them) to Sta. Maria Port in Siocon then to Zamboanga City," Mallaca told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Efforts to reach Dacon proved futile. Mallaca said a letter complaint against the logging activi-

ties was sent to Zamboanga del Norte Gov. Isagani Amatong and Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun.

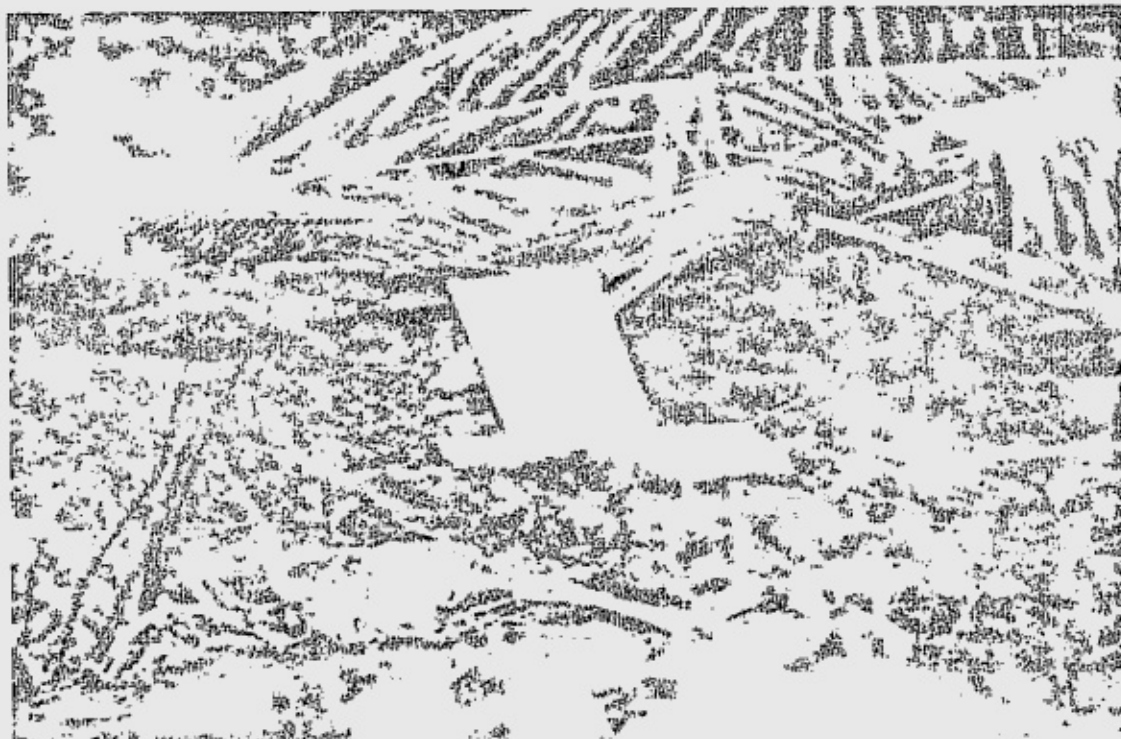
"But our pleas landed in deaf ears," he said.

Dacon said it has a permit from Gozun and holds a management contract from three Integrated Forest Management Agreement (Ifma) holders that are authorized to cut trees of all species.

"We believe they (Ifma holders) are just dummies," he said. According to Mallaca, the issuance of Ifma runs counter to the national government's policy of reforestation.

"The government is spending billions for reforestation to save our mountains yet we allow cutting of trees," he said.

"In our area Madam President, our government need not spend for reforestation, a forest is already here, all we have to do is preserve and protect it, please help us," the group said



PRAYERS were not enough to stop nature's wrath but faith hung on as an image of the Blessed Virgin protrudes from the debris of Southern Leyte's tragedy.

PDI PHOTO

in a letter sent on Dec. 2.

Mallaca said environment officials advised them to go to court.

"Yes, we will go to court but in the meantime, Dacon must be

stop cutting our trees," he said.

NGOs and environmentalists also urged the President to order the issuance of a cease and desist order against Dacon, investigate regional and provincial environ-

ment officials, file criminal charges against the officials involved and revoke permits and authority to cut issued to the logging firm. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Mayor in trouble for pickup purchase

By Alex V. Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—The Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas has ordered the two-month suspension of Canlaon City Mayor Judith Cardenas in connection with the city's purchase of a luxury car as her official service vehicle.

Primo Miro, deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas, in a decision dated Oct. 30, found Cardenas guilty of simple misconduct for purchasing a luxury vehicle.

He also cleared Canlaon City Treasurer Maria Luisa Luza and City Accountant Julianio Montero of any wrongdoing in the transaction.

Cardenas asked the Ombudsman Visayas to reconsider its decision, maintaining that what the city purchased was not a luxury vehicle.

But the suspension order may not be carried out because of the ban on the suspension of elected officials, which took effect on Dec. 15 until the May 2004 elections.

The case came from a complaint filed by the Canlaon People's Rights Movement, led by Lea Acallar, after the city purchased a Nissan Frontier pickup for the Canlaon City government on Aug. 29, 2002, particularly for the use of Cardenas.

The vehicle, which was bought from Nissan-Bacolod for P1,097,200, has an engine displacement of 3,200 cc, which is beyond the ceiling of 3,000 cc outlined by President Macapagal-Arroyo in Administrative Order No. 3.

AO 3 defined "luxury vehicle" as, among others, any passenger motor vehicle worth at least P1.3 million.

POST-DOS PALMAS PLAN

EU envoys confident of Palawan tourism

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—The European Union has expressed full that Palawan will bounce back after the onslaught on tourism of terrorism and economic woes.

The 11 ambassadors who visited Palawan for three days were impressed with the province's natural resources and tourist attractions.

"We firmly recommend that you get in the way a medium term tourism recovery program," said Ambassador Paul Dimond of the United Kingdom.

He added that Palawan needs cooperation between private investors and local government units to create more jobs and to strengthen tourism.

"We think everyone who goes to the Philippines should go to Palawan," said Jan de Kok, European Commission ambassador to the Philippines.

The EU Heads of Missions went around the project sites of the EU-funded Palawan Tropical Forestry

Protection Program (PTPPP) for two days. After seven years since 1996, PTPPP recently got a year's extension for EU funding.

It continues to assist LGUs and communities in managing the 12 priority watersheds which were identified based on their levels of importance and critical conditions.

Aside from the watershed management planning, the PTPPPP creates geographic information systems and introduced agriculture and livelihood programs to communities.

The extension of the program from June 2003 to June 2004 aims to ensure the sustainability of PTPPPP achievements from 1996 to 2002. Its purpose is to transfer projects, technology and skills to the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff, LGUs, people's organizations and beneficiaries.

De Kok said the EU is satisfied with the progress of the projects

in Palawan. "We are quite encouraged by the way projects have been implemented," he said.

In terms of sustainability, he said that EU funding would not always be available because funds are already running for certain projects. He is optimistic, however, that the communities will manage the projects on their own.

For the last eight to nine years, De Kok said EU has given P1-billion worth of projects with around P300 million in counterpart funding from the Philippine government.

Despite the end of the project in June 2004, the ambassadors from EU said their respective countries might still pour in some assistance to the province.

Finland Ambassador Raimo Anttila said his country has been working with non-government organizations and LGUs in Mindoro and the Cordilleras for the protection of the indigenous peoples. This kind of project might be

adopted in Palawan, he said.

Austrian Ambassador Christian Krepela said his government is involved with the President's Bridge Program. One of the beneficiaries is this city that saw the construction of the Montible Bridge that connects barangays in far-flung areas.

The EU heads of missions were impressed with the safety and hospitality accorded to them. During their field visits, they were welcomed by schoolchildren waving small flags of their countries. "It was a touching and very emotional feeling," said Ambassador Herbert Jess of Germany.

Other EU Ambassadors who joined the delegation to Palawan were Christian Tanghe, (Belgium), Renee Voyret (France), Umberto Colesanti (Italy), Robert Vornis (Netherlands), Annika Markovic (Sweden), and Stanislav Slavicky (Czech Republic). *Jofelle Tesorero, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

INQUIRER *Northern Luzon*

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

In this Cordillera town, Christmas is observed 91 days before Dec. 25

By Desiree Caluza
Besao, Mt. Province

WHILE the rest of the world celebrate the birth of Jesus on Dec. 25, villagers in Barangay Agawa in Besao, Mt. Province, had already observed their own version of Christmas on Sept. 30.

Members of the Agawa tribe from various parts of the globe gathered their family members on that day to feast on native cakes—their version of the *noche buena*—to mark the start of planting season in this farming village.

They called their festivity the "Linnapet (native rice cake) Day."

When the sun's rays hit the protruding rock in Mt. Ambaon Bato every Sept. 30, Agawa residents immediately prepare their seedbeds.

Although the villagers in Agawa, one of the 14 barangays of Besao, were done with their festivity almost three months ago, most of them tried to celebrate Christmas this time of the year.

Agricultural cycle

Every Sept. 30, the Agawa people pound rice and cook *linnapet* as thanksgiving for the start of the agricultural cycle. It is in this time of the year when villagers gather around the mother *dap-ay* (a circular stone structure where the council of elders meet) to observe how the sun's streaks would project like a laser beam to a stone in the Ambaon Bato, parallel to the stone calendar located in the *dap-ay*.

This marks the agricultural cycle and for the Agawa to share the *linnapet*.

"This occasion is the local people's version of Christmas, wherein families celebrate together the spirit of the *linnapet* festival," Besao Councilor Gloria Bantog said.

On Sept. 29, people from other villages flock to Agawa to watch the spectacular sunbeams. It is al-

so the time to cook, share and eat *linnapet*.

'Linnapet Day'

Bantog said that even the Agawa people who are based in the United States, Hong Kong and Europe celebrate the Linnapet Day.

"In Baguio, you'll find the Agawa converging at Burnham Park sharing our native delicacy," she said.

In Sitio Gueday in Barangay Agawa, the stone calendar sits among the tablets of stones in the *dap-ay*. According to elders, the stone calendar bears inscriptions etched by their ancestors who offered *alingo* (boar) to the spirits. The inscriptions are lines that are either long or short.

Bantog said the short lines indicate that the villagers have offered a small pig, while the longer lines mean they have offered bigger pigs to the spirits.

The inscriptions also indicate another meaning for the Agawa.

Bantog said a Jewish scientist named Spiback, who accidentally discovered the place in 1956, told the villagers that they might have descended from the Shang Dynasty of China.

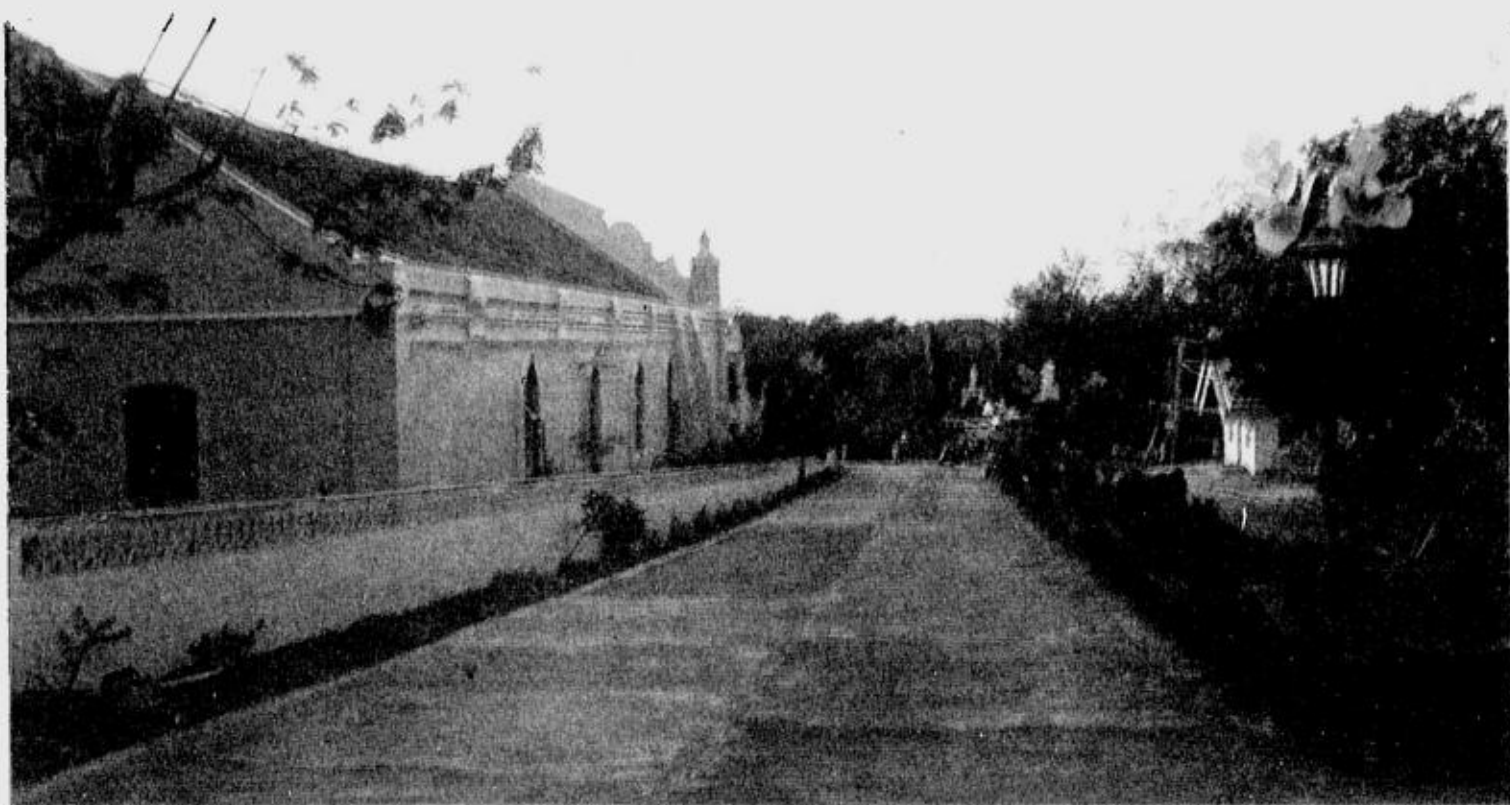
Like the ancient Chinese of the Shang Dynasty, the Agawa have chinky eyes and stocky body structure, said Bantog.

Citing anthropologist William Henry Scott, who studied the stone, Bantog said the stone calendar showed stark similarities between the ancient form of writing in China and the Agawa ancestors.

The mother *dap-ay*, called by the villagers as "Awaw," determines the planting season of the Agawa.

Before the advent of the Gregorian calendar, the Agawa's ancestors observed the sun's rays that would hit the two stones in Ambaon Bato and Sitio Gueday in a parallel projection.

According to villagers, a man observed in the early 1920s the movement of the sunrise and noticed that its rays would usually hit the stones every Sept. 30. That was when they decided to mark the official date for the "Linnapet Day."



THE ROAD going to the still under renovation town hall of Santa, Ilocos Sur. On the left side is the Roman Catholic Church. The town does not have any Christmas tree outside the town hall, only a few decorations, as they are easily destroyed by strong wind coming from the South China Sea.

PHOTOS BY LEONCIO G. BALBIN JR.

There's no Santa in the town of Santa

By Frank Cimatu
and Leoncio Balbin Jr.
Santa, Ilocos Sur

AT THIS time of the year, children all over the world are singing, "Where is Santa? Where is Santa's sleigh?" even as www.noradsanta.org has started tracking Santa through its radar. Well, the search is over. Santa is here.

It is a town in Ilocos Sur and it does not resemble North Pole. The only "sleds" you see are the noisy *kuliglig* (farm trailers) prowling the national highway.

The only resemblance to Santa's workshop is the Santa Multi-line food processing plant, which seems to be also quiet all throughout the year. There are some houses with Christmas lights, but the chimneys in the town are mostly for smoking tobacco leaves.

Santa Claus might not find Santa town special, but according to history, Santa town is as old as Santa Claus.

Town historian Juanito Abigania said Santa was already listed in maps made by Augustinian friars as early as 1832. There were records by Fr. Pedro Galende that Santa was already an independent town as early as 1713.

Abigania said that Santa might even be the second oldest town in Ilocos Sur, younger only than Vigan.

Although there was already a "St. A. Claus" appearing in American magazines as early as 1773, the official appearance of Santa Claus, a.k.a. Saint Nicholas, was in Clement Clarke's 1823 poem, "A Night Before Christmas."



THE LEGISLATIVE building of Santa, Ilocos Sur, which municipal employees use as temporary office as the town hall is undergoing renovation

But Abigania said Santa town was not really about Santa Claus. He said the Augustinian friars might have confused Santa with Santa Catalina de Baba, which was the old town of Tuley, an old *encomienda* founded in 1576.

Records showed that Tuley was located between Narvacan and Vigan, which is where Santa lies at present.

Abigania said that Tuley might also be the town of Santa Catalina de Baba. "Baba" here means "low" because the town is at sea level and there were records that it was washed out by strong waves at least three times.

As to why Santa was named Santa, Abigania suggested two reasons. He said church officials

assigned to give names to *pueblos* in Ilocos simply ran out of patron saints. All the saints were used up so Santa just became Santa.

Abigania said the women of the town looked saintly (*nasantaan nga langa*) with their long hair and dresses and they were very pious. Anyway, the name "Santa" was approved by the *alcalde mayor* of Vigan and presented as such to the Spanish governor-general, Abigania said.

Another Ilocos town with a Christmassy name is San Nicolas in Ilocos Norte. San Nicolas was founded in 1641 by a group of shipwrecked Spanish traders. Their boat was destroyed near the coast of Laoag and the traders decided to settle in that yet unnamed pueblo.

Eventually, the *pueblo* was named after San Nicolas de Tolentino. It officially became a town in 1733.

The Saint Nicholas, who eventually became Santa Claus, was the bishop of Myra in Turkey. The bishop loved to give gifts to children. Like the early Christians, he was imprisoned but was later released. He died on Dec. 6, AD 343 and his death anniversary eventually became Saint Nicholas Day.

Saint Nicholas of Tolentino is known as the patron of Holy Souls. He was ordained priest at the age of 18 and preached in the city of Tolentino in Italy till the day he died. He worked as a peacemaker in a city torn by civil war and was known as a preacher and healer.

A party pooper with a purpose

By Elizabeth Lolarga
Contributor

TO OTHERS he may seem like a party pooper, but this mayor knew when his people have stayed too long at the fair.

The gym of the Science City of Muñoz was crying out for an audience for "Dangal ng Lahing Pilipino," a free multimedia production honoring the country's National Artists and the opening cultural presentation of the city's charter anniversary early this month.

Not wanting the performers to play to a half-empty house, Mayor Nestor Alvarez had the nearby

perya (fair) shut down temporarily. The people had no choice but to stream out, move over to the gym and watch the Philippine

DAYTOY TI AMIANAN

Madrigal Singers, dancers Jaime del Prado, Gerard Mercado, Vinia Pamplona and Francis Loesin, actor-singers Isay Alvarez (no relation to the mayor), Tosca Puno, Gerard Mercado, Arnold Reyes and Roy Roloda, and guitarist Lester

Demetillo essay in song, dance, drama, choral singing and video the greatness of Lucio San Pedro, Levi Celerio, Fernando Amorsolo, Atang de la Rama, Amado V. Hernandez, Lucrecia Kasilang, Napoleon Abueva, Nick Joaquin, Wilfredo Ma. Guerrero, Lino Brocka and other National Artists of whom the average Filipino knows little about.

Directed by Chris Millado and choreographed by Agnes Locsin, the instructive, as well as entertaining, "Dangal ng Lahing Pilipino," part of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Outreach, is on the third phase of its national tour in an effort to raise the Filipinos' knowledge and awareness of

these 50 artists and their works. It has played in auditoriums and gyms in the Visayas and Mindanao, Bicol, Cavite and is winding up its tour of the rest of Luzon.

When the performers bowed, part of the audience in Muñoz rose and applauded heartily, perhaps not minding trading a "go" at the ferris wheel for a bit of art and culture for a change.

As for Mayor Alvarez, he proved once more why his popularity is growing among performing artists by feting them to a rich dinner of *lechon* and *kare-kare* and loading them with boxes of wafer-thin *silvanas* as *pasalubong* (gifts to take home).



AGAWA people converge around the "awaw" (mother *dap-ay*) to witness how the sun's rays will hit the stone calendar to mark the Linnapet Festival.

JOEL BELIRAN

SIX DIGIT

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METRO

Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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Overtaken truck spawns massive jam in Muntinlupa

By Margaux Ortiz

A TRAILER truck yesterday fell on its side at the South Luzon Expressway causing a massive traffic jam in Muntinlupa.

According to Philippine National Construction Corporation's Emmanuel Roque, the 20-foot truck (DUA 853) met an accident at around 1 p.m., locking traffic on both sides of the expressway.

Truck driver Roderick Apo, 25, sustained minor injuries. He still could not provide details as to how the accident happened, Roque said.

Roque added that the traffic jam stretched from Mamplasan to Bilibid in the northbound lane, and from C-5 Road to Bilibid on the southbound lane.

Yesterday, the C-5/Ortigas Avenue Extension Interchange was opened to motorists, marking an end to Edsa's traffic woes.

According to Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Traffic Operations Director Angelito Vergel de Dios, vehicles usually congesting Edsa could now take the new interchange as an alternative route.

With the interchange, vehicles usually plying Edsa could be lessened by as much as 50 percent, Vergel de Dios said.

"Edsa was overly congested in recent years because of the ongoing construction on C-5," the traffic director said.

"Now motorists, especially those driving private vehicles, have the option to take the alternate road," he added.

MMDA suspends traffic scheme this holiday

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday announced that the number-coding scheme for vehicles will be suspended on Dec. 24 and 25, and Jan. 1 and 2.

MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel De Dios, however, emphasized that the

scheme would not be suspended during special non-working days for government employees.

He said that on those non-working days, private companies have the option to require their employees to go to work.

According to Proclamation No. 503, issued by Executive Secretary Al-

berto Romulo by authority of the President, Dec. 24 and Jan. 2 are considered special non-working days throughout the country, in lieu of Dec. 30, Rizal Day, which shall be a regular working day.

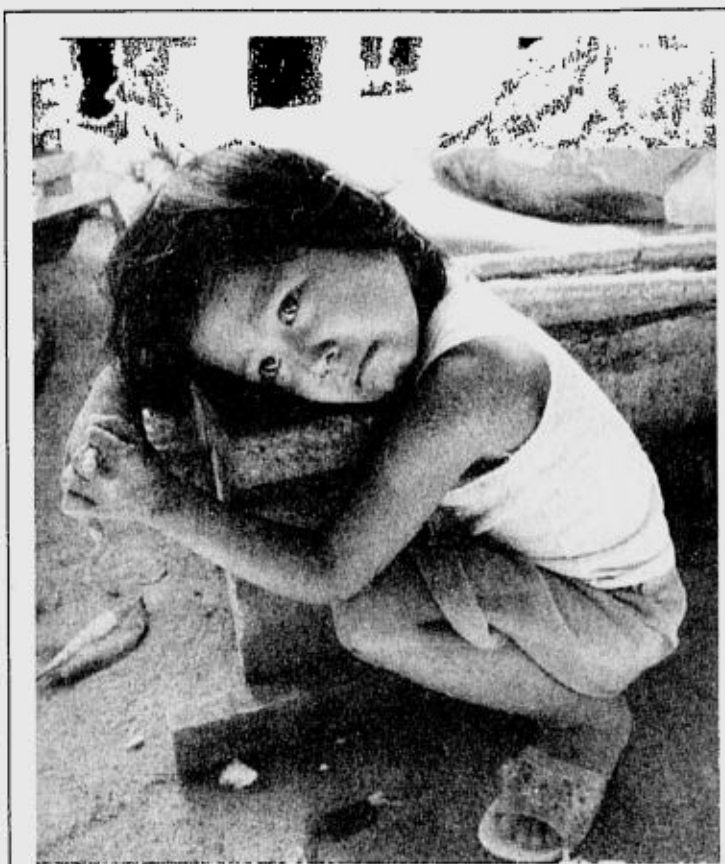
This order also applies to the private sector.

The proclamation also said that Dec.

26, which falls on Friday, would be a special non-working day for government employees only.

He reminded motorists that the number coding is automatically suspended on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

"That's pretty easy to remember," the traffic director said. **Margaux Ortiz**



WAITING FOR MAMA

Jasmin appears despondent as she waits outside the QC Jail, where her mother was visiting a relative. The girl was not allowed inside the detention center for safety reasons.

JOAN BONDORC

Army colonel killed in QC

By Tina Santos

ONE OF two armed men gunned down an Army colonel in Quezon City yesterday morning.

Col. Raul Heredia, 49, an instructor at the National Defense College of the Philippines in Camp Aguinaldo, was slain as he was parking his car at his parents' house on V. Luciano Street, Barangay Masagana, Project 4, Q.C.

Heredia is a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy (Class 1975).

According to the Central Police District, Heredia was shot several times in the body with a 9-mm pistol at 6:45 a.m.

The suspects then reportedly fled on board a motorcycle.

Heredia was rushed to the Quirino Memorial Medical Center but died as he was undergoing treatment.

CPD Criminal Investigation Unit chief Raul Medina said they were still determin-

ing the motive for the killing.

However, CPD director Chief Supt. Napoleon Castro said there were indications that the shooting was a case of mistaken identity.

According to Castro, the real target could have been Heredia's brother, Renato, who is a ranking police officer assigned in Camp Crame.

"He might have been mistaken by the killers for his brother," the CPD chief said.

But Castro could not say for certain why anyone would want to target Renato for assassination.

"Marami sigurong nakabanggang mga sindikato yung kapatid niya kaya gustong ipatay," he said.

The CPD released yesterday an artist's sketch of one of the suspect's in the killings.

Authorities describe the gunman as between 30 to 40 year's old, 5'8" tall, medium built and dark complexioned. **With AFP**

Nazareno stage razed in blaze

By Leila Salaverria

THE STAGE used in the commemoration of the feast of the Nazareno (Black Nazarene) in Quiapo was destroyed by one of two fires that hit the city of Manila early yesterday morning.

A 9-minute blaze that began at 5:50 a.m. destroyed the wooden stage built at the Plaza Miranda, fronting the Quiapo church.

The fire also gutted the office of the Komite de Festejos of the Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno de Quiapo, which was under the stage. The Komite organizes and supervises the annual event.

P03 Jojo Magallanes said around P100,000 worth of property was destroyed. No one was reported injured and no other establishments were affected.

SP04 Romeo Rosini said the stage was built for the feast of the Jesus Nazareno de Quiapo, which is celebrated every Jan. 9 and is among the most attended fiestas in the country.

Arson investigators gathered that one of the air conditioning units at the Komite de Festejos office caught fire.

Earlier, at 3:20 a.m., another fire broke out at the basement of the Divisoria Mall.

The fire, which lasted for 27 minutes, began at 3:20 a.m.

Magallanes said the blaze hit the stall operated by a certain Daisy Ortega and damaged P1,000 worth of merchandise, mostly toys and sparklers.

The fire set off the sparklers, which produced thick, white smoke that filled the area.

Although no one was reported hurt in the fire, thousands of pesos worth of merchandise in adjoining stalls were damaged by water.

Caloocan youth killed in another dawn explosion

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

JOHN Elmer Bangit, 17, went out of the house to buy his father a pack of coffee for breakfast. He never got back alive.

Bangit was instantly killed when a pillbox exploded on his face early yesterday morning in Caloocan City.

City Police chief Benjardi Mantele yes-

terday told the INQUIRER that Bangit was on his way to a store in Bagong Silang at about 4:30 a.m. when one of at least nine teenagers lobbed the pillbox which exploded on the victim's face.

The teenagers were on the roof of one of the houses on the street and were waiting for members of a rival gang to pass by, Mantele said.

The suspects escaped, while Bangit was taken to the Rodriguez Hospital in Tala, Caloocan.

Yesterday's pillbox explosion was the second in Caloocan since the traditional Simbang Gabi (Dawn Mass) began.

On Dec. 18, seven teenagers were wounded when a pillbox exploded in the vicinity of the San Roque Cathedral.

Police officials said that the brawls and violence during the Dawn Mass celebrations are a result of too much merrymaking.

National Capital Region Police Office director Ricardo De Leon earlier told the INQUIRER that most of the reported incidents involved drunk and thrill-seeking teenagers.

P7-M worth of 'rave' drug seized

By Margaux Ortiz

MILLIONS of pesos worth of a rave drug popular in Hong Kong and Taiwan was seized in a raid by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency yesterday in a Pasay City condominium unit.

Thousands of vials of ketamine hydrochloride, a strong animal tranquilizer that has a mind-altering effect on people, were found at Room 1203 Somerset Condominium, Tower 1, Leveriza St., owned by a certain Joey Tan.

Tan, according to PDEA chief Anselmo Avenido, is now being hunt-

ed by PDEA, the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response for alleged involvement in drug trafficking, kidnapping and car theft.

Anselmo said the finished product, popularly called "K," could be taken in tablet or powder form and has the same effects as another well-known party drug, Ecstasy.

Ketamine and Ecstasy are known to be used in so-called rave parties, which are characterized by frenzied and raucous merrymaking.

Anselmo said it was the first time the PDEA seized a big haul of the

drug, which was estimated to have a street value of P7 million.

"The drug is very new in the Philippines," Avenido told the INQUIRER in an interview.

"In fact, it is not yet included in the Dangerous Drugs Act or Republic Act 9165," he added.

Avenido said they had to bring Bureau of Food and Drugs officials with them to identify the drugs as "illegal."

Avenido also said they have already recommended that ketamine be immediately be included in the list of dangerous drugs.

In some countries, ketamine is classified as a regulated veterinary drug.

Health exec: Watch what you eat, drink on Xmas

By Tarra Quismundo

EVERYTHING in moderation.

The Manila Health Department (MHD) yesterday reminded Manila residents to take it easy in feasting this Christmas season.

"Everyone must avoid eating too much fatty foods, like ham, lechon and queso de bola," said Dr. Carmencita Solis, MHD chief of Planning and Coordination Division.

Solis recommended a hearty and balanced noche buena dinner, with food high in fiber like fruits and veg-

etables that aid proper digestion.

And like any regular day, drinking too much must also be avoided.

"Diarrhea and indigestion are common during the holiday season because of the gatherings that people attend," Solis said. "If (people) want to avoid getting sick, they should eat and drink in moderation."

She also advised people to drink water or fruit juices before, during, and after eating.

Solis also reminded the public of buying only fresh ingredients like meat and vegetables. She also ad-

vised proper food preparation and storage to avoid food poisoning.

She said that proper hygiene, including hand washing, should be practiced before and after handling food.

"Everything must be well-cooked. It would also be better if people will not cook excessively."

She pointed out that dairy-based products, like those mixed into cakes, leche flan, fruit salads and other desserts commonly served during noche buena, should be stored properly to avoid getting diarrhea.

Ibay hopes to break Binay's hold on Makati City



OUT TO unseat Mayor Jejomar Binay, Makati City first councilor Oscar Ibay (second from left) does the thumbs up with his party-mates at the Lakas-CMD during their coming out party at the LTA Building in Makati.

JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

By Alcuin Papa

A FORMER ally of the Binays of Makati is set to challenge the dynasty that has ruled the country's financial capital for the past 17 years.

Councilor Oscar Ibay of the city's first district, declared his candidacy for the mayoral post yesterday under the administration party, Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats.

Ibay, 55, who had been part of the slate of Mayor Jejomar Binay, had garnered the most votes for councilor in the last two elections.

Ibay told reporters that he

had been thinking of parting ways with Binay since the last elections, when the mayor allegedly wanted to dump him for Binay's son, Jejomar Erwin.

"My own side wanted to dump me. But this time, I am heeding the people's call for leaders who really want to serve," Ibay said in Filipino.

He said he would immediately investigate charges of corruption allegedly being perpetrated by the Binays.

Ibay predicted a landslide victory for himself and his slate, explaining that he would win handily in his bailiwick first district and garner the majority

vote in ten of the 13 barangays in the second district, which is Binay's bailiwick.

"Tapusin na ang mga Binay (Let's oust the Binays). My time has come," he exclaimed.

John Arenas, son of socialite Baby Arenas, will be Ibay's running mate.

In Ibay's slate will be Miguel "Mace" Yabut, grandson of former Makati mayor Nemesio Yabut, and Ibay's own son, Frederick.

Binay was first appointed officer-in-charge of Makati City in 1986. He served three consecutive terms and was reelected in 2001.

METROBRIEFS

Paramilitary man slain

TWO MEN believed to be communist guerillas on Monday night gunned down a leader of a paramilitary unit in Angono, Rizal. Police said Felipe Valderama, 49, leader of the Mike Delta Force organization, was shot three times. P02 Pablo Medina said Valderama was resting inside the paramilitary group's headquarters in Bethel Village, Mahabang Parang when two men armed with a shotgun and a .38-caliber pistol barged into the office and shot him. The pulprits, both wearing bonnets, escaped on board a motorcycle, Medina said. **Luigo del Puerto**

Death plunge

DANILO Medina Jr. on Monday fell to his death from the sixth floor of the Sheraton Marina Hotel in Manila. SP02 Danilo Vidad said Medina, 21, of Pasay City, failed to hook up his belt to the safety harness before he started cleaning the windows of the hotel at the corner of M.H. Del Pilar Street and Pedro Gil Streets. At around 2:30 p.m., Medina slipped from his harness and fell on the canopy of the third floor, Vidad said. **Leila Salaverria**

ABS-CBN up for libel

IGLESIA Ni Cristo representatives have filed a libel suit against broadcast journalists Karen Davila and Cito Beltran of the ABS-CBN news program "Insider" for claiming that the religious group sells the votes of its members during elections. The INC also filed charges against field reporter Cherry Mercado, Joel Rocamora, director of the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD), and the ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. for allegedly discrediting the group and its executive minister Efraim Manalo. INC representative Bienvenido Santiago said the libel case stemmed from a news segment the Insider aired on Dec. 17. **Tina Santos**

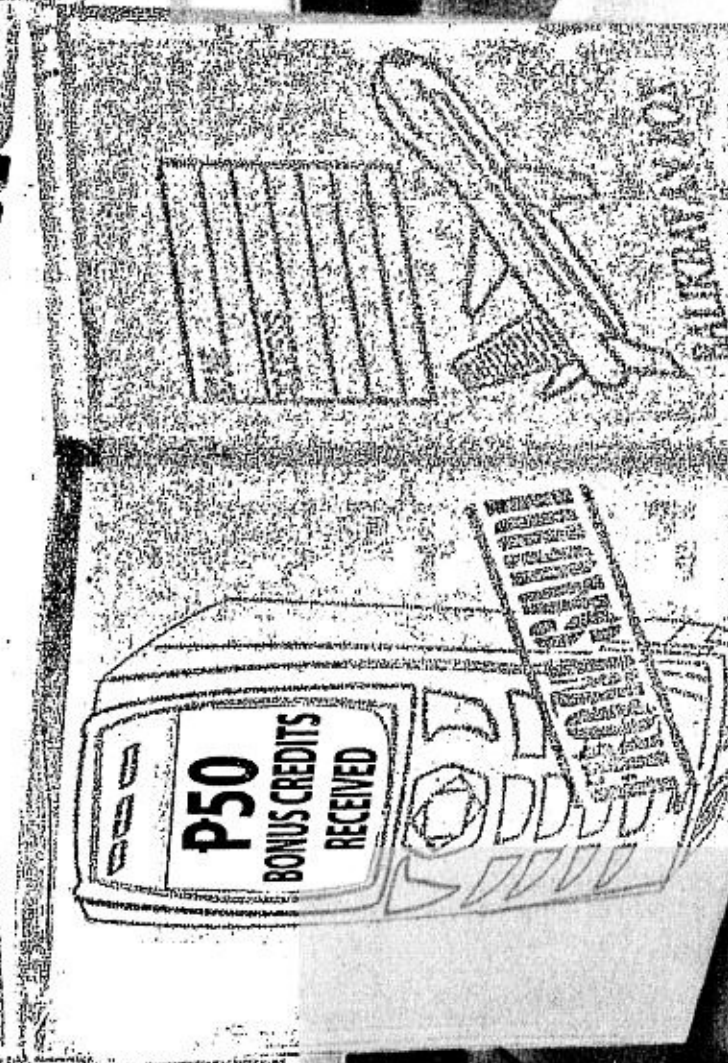
Bogus cop falls

ERICK Soriano had been passing himself off as a policeman so he could extort money from people. But his luck ran out yesterday morning when six real lawmen, including the head of the Western Police District's homicide section, caught him in the act of fleeing Donato Amante, 22, and Ryan Paul Gaon, 22, on Taft Avenue, Manila. Senior Insp. Alejandro Yanquiling Jr. and five of his men arrested Soriano when he failed to show a badge or any proper identification. **Leila Salaverria**

Barba; 42

MARIA Antonia "Gigi" C. Barba, 42, died of a heart attack on Dec. 21. She is survived by her husband Jun, children Sev, Kim and Kai, and parents Romeo and Rafaela Cobarrubia. Her body lies in state at the family residence at 61 Colt St., Rancho 1, Marikina City. Interment is on Dec. 26. Barba was the assistant chief librarian of the University of the East Library and secretary of the Philippine Library Association.

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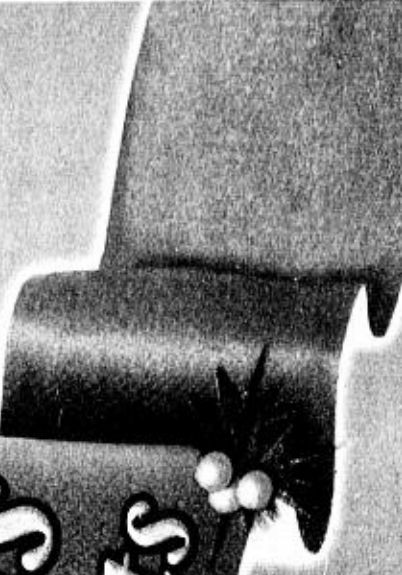
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SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

Taulava, Yap head major PSA awardees

DISTINGUISHING themselves as the best in their respective ranks, Paul Asi Taulava and James Yap were unanimously chosen by the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) as its 2003 basketball honorees for its Annual Awards Night on Jan. 9 at the Manila Pavilion.

The 6-foot-9 Taulava easily beat the only other player nominated for the professional basketball player of the year award, Rudy Hatfield of Coca Cola, for another big individual honor capping a big season that saw him power Talk 'N Text to its first ever championship in the Philippine Basketball Association.

And just two weeks ago, the man they called "The Rock" was also the overwhelming winner of the pro league's Most Valuable Player award, the first foreign-bred player to do so after Ricardo

Brown of Great Taste Coffee in 1985.

Like Taulava, Yap also had a banner year in amateur basketball, one which saw him win the UAAP MVP trophy, and anchor University of the East to another Final Four stint before capping his 2003 stint by leading the RP-Cebuana Lhuillier team to the Southeast Asian Games title.

"The sportswriters had an easy time making their choices in pro and amateur basketball. They (Taulava and Yap) dominated their respective fields this season. And for that, they will be honored along with the other achievers in other sports," said PSA Selection committee chair and Tempo Sports editor Rey Bancod.

Taulava and Yap are in the short list of major awardees to be feted during the Awards Night sponsored by Red Bull and



YAP



TAULAVA

Agfa Color and supported by San Miguel Corp., Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), Samsung, Philippine Basketball

Association (PBA) and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

Aside from Taulava and Yap, other major award recipients are Dorothy Delasin, women's golf; Wind Blown, horse of the year; Mark Paragua, chess; Arnel Quirmit, pro cycling; Patty Dilema, jockey of the year; and Harry Tañamor, amateur boxing.

People's consensus world featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao, also the reigning International Boxing Federation (IBF) super bantamweight titlist, and bowling World Cup hero Christian Jan (CJ) Suarez head the awardees as co-winners of the prestigious Athlete of the Year plum.

In another big highlight of the two-hour rites, the sportswriting fraternity will confer on golfing greats Celestino

Tugot and Ben Arda the Hall of Fame awards, their reward for leaving enviable records in golf achieved mostly in the sixties and early seventies.

President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to grace the affair and personally hand out the awards to the athletes.

At the same affair, the 48 gold medalists in the last 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam will also be given special citations by the 80-member PSA, acknowledged as the oldest media organization in the country.

Other individuals, sports associations and corporations who did their share in making the year about to end a big, memorable one for local sports will also be cited, according to PSA president Roberto Cuevas, sports editor of the Manila Standard.

Top 12

The stories that defined the year in local Sports

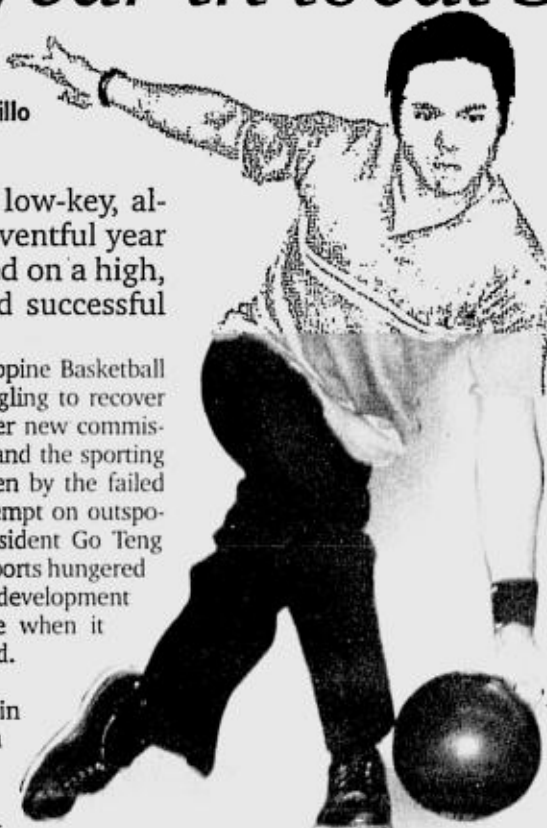
By Musong Castillo
Contributor

IT WAS a low-key, almost uneventful year that ended on a high, emphatic and successful note.

With the Philippine Basketball Association struggling to recover its old clout under new commissioner Noli Eala and the sporting community shaken by the failed assassination attempt on outspoken athletics president Go Teng Kok, Philippine sports hungered for a positive development that finally came when it was least expected.

Campaigning without fanfare in the World Tenpin Bowling Championship in Malaysia last September, Cecilia Yap, Liza del Rosario and Liza Clutario captured the gold medal in the ladies' trios with a record-breaking performance that recalled the country's long list of triumphs in the sport.

That opened the floodgates for a series of victories that lifted Filipino spirits and even rubbed off on the RP campaign in the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games early this month where the coun-



CJ SUAREZ wins World Cup.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

try improved from fifth to fourth overall with 48 gold medals.

The most glittering triumph was turned in by IBF superbantam champion Manny Pacquiao, who put on extra poundage to humble the world's best pound-for-pound featherweight fighter, Marco Antonio Barrera of Mexico, in the 11th of their 12-round non-title

bout in San Antonio, Texas.

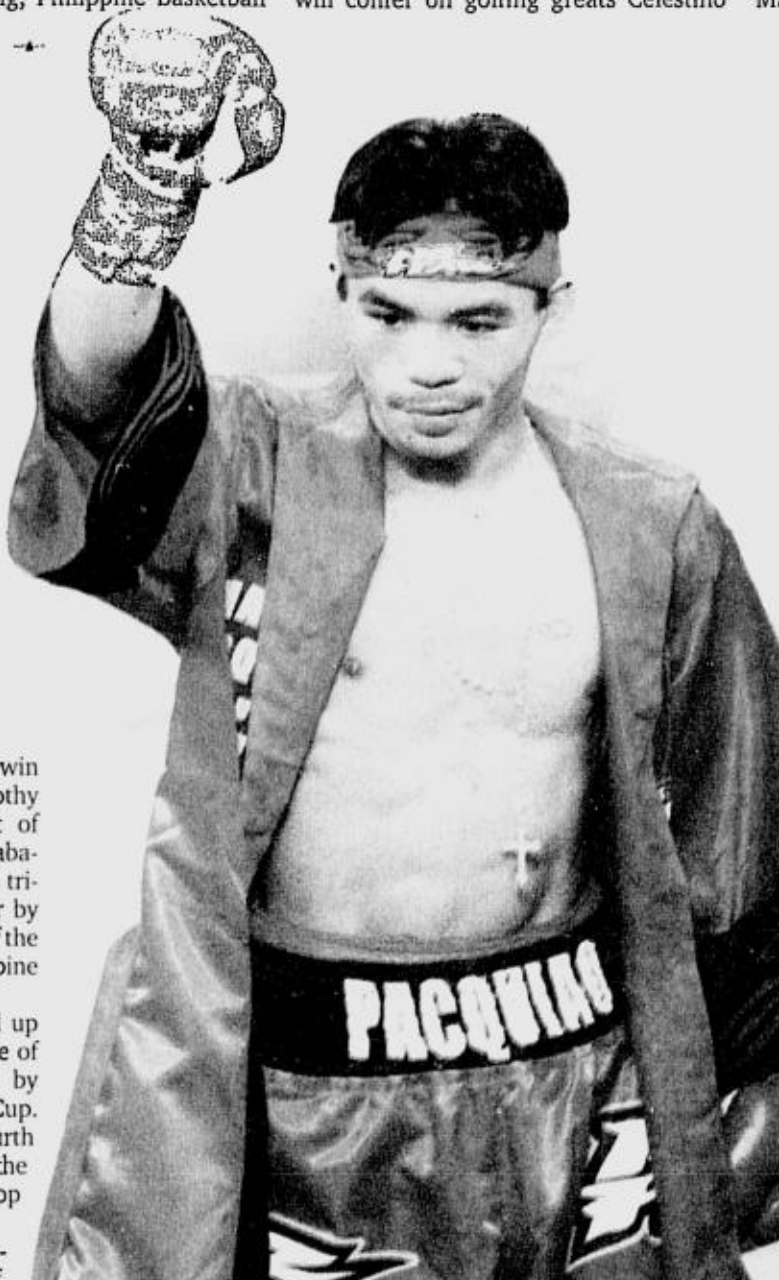
Close behind Pacquiao's win was the victory of Fil-Am Dorothy Delasin in the Tournament of Champions of the LPGA in Alabama. It was the third career triumph in the ladies golf tour by Delasin, a two-time Athlete of the Year awardee by the Philippine Sportswriters Association.

Earlier, CJ Suarez stepped up and gave the world a glimpse of Paeng Nepomuceno reborn by winning the Bowling World Cup. With Jojo Caniare landing fourth in the women's division, the Philippines finished as the top nation in the event.

Their performances further boosted the stock of Steve Hontiveros, who was earlier chosen world bowling president and became only the third Filipino to head a world sporting body after Florencio Campomanes of chess and Lito Puyat of amateur basketball.

While Eala grappled with, among others, the drug-testing and Fil-Sham issues in the PBA, the Final Four and championship showdowns in the UAAP easily diverted attention from the pro league.

The Far Eastern University Tamaraws went on to capture the UAAP title over the defending champion Ateneo Eagles as Koy Banal beat, elder brother



MANNY Pacquiao defeats the world's toughest featherweight.

Joel in a rare coaching duel between brothers.

The virtual last-quarter storm of achievements that drew applause from no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and other major events of the year deserve another quick look.

And so, here's the INQUIRER's top 12 stories for the year.

1. Manny Pacquiao humbles Mexican legend Marco Antonio Barrera.

With millions of Filipinos glued to their TV sets, the under-

dog Pacquiao destroyed the Mexican legend Marco Antonio Barrera, stopping the world's best featherweight fighter, in the 11th round of their non-title encounter on Nov. 16 at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas. The former bakery worker from GenSan, trained by American Freddie Roach, was hailed as one of the greatest Filipino fighters ever even as he redeemed himself from a snub of the annual PSA Awards early in the year and a drunken display of wrath after being snubbed by a girl in a nightclub in Mindanao. Pacquiao is

now in the US to sign the contract as challenger to WBA and IBF featherweight champion Juan Manuel "Dinamita" Marquez of Mexico in a fight to be held either in late March or early April.

2. CJ Suarez becomes second Pinoy to win Bowling World Cup

Now Paeng Nepomuceno can retire for good. With four-time World Cup champion no longer as active, CJ Suarez emerged a worthy future successor as he won the World Cup in Hungary with a sustained show of excellence starting in the eliminations. Jojo Caniare just barely missed pulling off an RP victory double, but in placing fourth, she helped the Philippines clinch the rare honor as the top nation of the competition.

3. Philippine contingent claims fourth overall in Vietnam SEA Games.

Even President Macapagal-Arroyo joined the bandwagon in hailing the Philippine delegation for a job well done in the 22nd Vietnam Southeast Asian Games. The Chief Executive said she was proud of the fourth place finish of the Filipinos in the once war-torn country, where Team Philippines amassed a total of 48 gold medals. Though finishing just one rung higher the last time the SEAG was held, this achievement brings hope for an even stronger finish when the Philippines hosts the 23rd staging in 2005 in Manila and other cities.

4. Athletics chief Go Teng Kok survives slay attempt

Go Teng Kok loves to talk. Fact is, he has an opinion on practically anything and everything that concern Philippine sports.

But one early morning in June as he was about to park his car near the athletics office at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, a lone assailant almost successfully shot Go's mouth off—literally.

Three bullets from a 9mm pistol went through the glass of Go's SUV and found their mark in Go's

TOP 12/A21

New PBA TV partner known on Dec. 26

UE hotshots Yap, Artadi join rookie draft

By June Navarro

DOWN to three.

The Philippine Basketball Association yesterday narrowed down its choice for a television partner next year among ABC-5, Jemah Television and NBN-4, with the winner to be chosen on Dec. 26.

"The board has decided to defer action because of several circumstances surrounding the designation of the PBA's new television partner," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala after yesterday's meeting.

Meanwhile, UE stalwarts James Yap and Paul Artadi joined yesterday the annual rookie draft set Jan. 16 at the Glorietta Activity Center.

La Salle's Willie Wilson and Wesley Gonzales of Ateneo will also test their market value in the draft, raising the number of rookie aspirants to 24.

Since the league's contract with NBN-4 is still in effect until the end of the year, Eala said the PBA would honor the agreement as a sign of respect for the government-run station.

NBN-4 owes the PBA P134 million, P66 mil-

lion short of the network's P200-million obligation for winning exclusive television rights of the league early in the year.

A reliable source said ABC-5, the station owned by Tonyboy Cojuangco, is the leading candidate after impressing majority of the team governors with its "realistic" proposal.

Eala declined to reveal the figures on the ABC-5 offer, but the same source said the station is offering P150 million for the 2004 season coverage.

Expectations ran high that ABC-5 would be named as the new coveror, but the last-minute entry of Jemah and NBN-4, which both formalized their proposals yesterday, forced the board to defer its decision.

"The board has agreed to consult their respective organizations with respect to the new proposals submitted," said Eala.

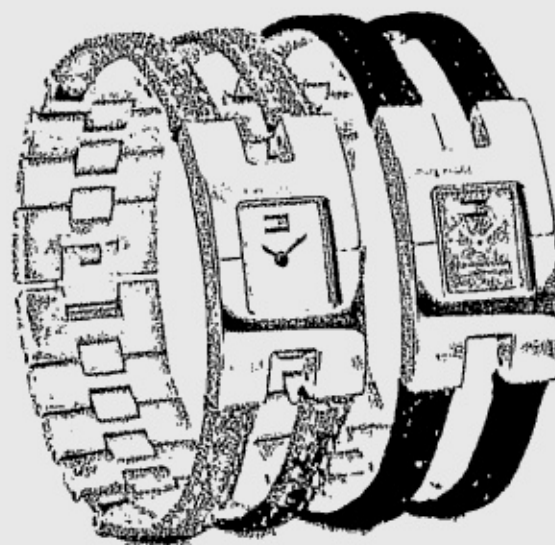
Eala said Jemah TV executive Mark Rocas made a pitch yesterday, proposing to produce, finance and market the PBA, with IBC-13 as carrier.

The return of investment will be split three

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DAYRIT: Confident

No early decision on RP claim to 49th gold

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINES will have to wait a little longer to claim its 49th gold medal in the Southeast Asian Games.

That's because the protest filed by the Philippines before the SEAG Federation over the disqualification of the men's 4x200-meter freestyle relay team due to a computer error may take months to be resolved, accord-

ing to Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit.

"This is not an easy case," Dayrit told the INQUIRER, adding that the SEAG will base its decision on the recommendation of the international swimming federation, known for its French acronym Fina.

Unlike dope cases, Dayrit said the SEAG Federation will need to rely on the expertise of the Fina.

"This case involved technicalities, and the only body that knows it is the Fina itself," he noted.

However, even if the Fina comes out with an early decision, the SEAG Federation won't reveal the decision until March, when it meets in Manila to discuss matters concerning the Philippines' hosting of the 2005 SEAG.

"That is, unless we find reason to hold the

SEAG Federation meeting earlier than March," the POC chief said.

Nevertheless, Dayrit said he's confident that the country—which finished fourth in the Vietnam Games with 48 victories—can get back the gold considering that the RP delegation followed strictly the process in lodging protests.

The Philippines' protest was the only one filed during the Vietnam Games, he said.

MONDAY SHOCKERS

Blu Star gets back at Fash

IT WAS a bizarre Monday.

After Viva Mineral Water-FEU and Sunkist-UST scored all-important wins, Blu Star capped the day of upsets with a masterful 80-74 win over Fash Liquid in a game dubbed as showdown of detergents in the PBL Platinum Cup at the Pasig Sports Center.

With Lou Gatumbato providing a little of everything, the Detergent Kings dictated the tempo of the game in a complete turnaround of their first encounter where Fash proved too fast and furious for Blu Star.

Beaten by 26 points (54-80) in the first round, the Detergent Kings worked patiently this time, rotating the ball with extra care and employing a trapping defense as Blu Star picked up its 6th win in 10 starts.

Blu Star now needs just to win one of its remaining two games to secure the third semis slot.

The Tigers, relying heavily on the red-hot shooting of fast-rising Jemal Vizcarra, stunned first semifinalist Welcoat, 89-83, to grab the second semifinal slot.

Viva, Fash and Montaña remain in contention for the last semis berth.

Despite a 3-6 mark, the Water Force seem to have the inside track after winning their last two games.

Gatumbato had six of his game-high 16 points in the final five minutes, including a huge triple that shattered a 67-67 count.

STANDINGS	W	L
Welcoat	8	2
Sunkist-UST	7	4
Blustar	6	4
Fash Liquid	4	5
Montaña	4	5
Viva-FEU	3	6
ICTSI-La Salle	2	8

GAMES JAN. 3
(Pasig Sports Center)
2 p.m.—Viva-FEU vs Blustar
4 p.m.—Fash Liquid vs Montaña

"It was a big win for us but we have to keep our focus. We need one more win," said coach Leo Isaac. "I just hope we can grab the other semis berth."

The Liquid Power, who ruled the first conference, slipped to 4-5 in a tie with Montaña Pawshop, which earlier in the day suffered its third straight defeat at the hands of the Water Force (79-73).

Also shining for Blu Star were Eric de la Cuesta, who added 14 points. Ronald Pascual and Marc Victoria combined for 23 points.

Pascual also made life miserable for Rich Alvarez, who was held to just one point in the final quarter. The 6-foot-4 Ateneo star finished with only 10 points.

Peter June Simon and Francis Mercado tallied 19 points each for Fash.

Scores:

BLU STAR 80—Gatumbato 16, De la Cuesta 14, Pascual 13, Victoria 10, Mesina 8, Ferrer 6, Junio 5, Gamboa 4, Lopez 2, Prior 2, Mendez 0.

FASH 74—Mercado 19, Simon 19, Salangsang 11, Alvarez 10, Gellig 7, Dy 3, Fonacier 2, Bugla 2, Benedicto 1, Tan 0, Dualan 0, Gonzales 0, Tenorio 0.

Quarters: 18-17, 37-30, 56-51, 80-74



ALEX Compton of Sunkist-UST slips while trying to elude Welcoat's Nalbert Omolon in Monday night's game won by the Tigers.

New PBA TV partner ...

From page A19

ways among Jemah, IBC and the PBA, he added.

NBN-4 beat the deadline with an offer of a co-production with the PBA.

"We have already narrowed our choices down to three. But decisions have to be made this year because it will have far reaching effects critical in posturing the league in the coming years," said Eala.

"We're looking at all possible an-

gles and options with respect to the time slot and production value of each proposal," Eala added.

Jemah has offered to air the PBA games on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays while ABC-5 has proposed a mixture of delayed and live telecasts three times a week.

NBN-4, meanwhile, has committed to follow the present schedule but offered a profit-sharing scheme to the league in marketing and advertising.

Triumphant return for Jayvie; Negrido prevails

MULTITITLED Jayvie Agojo returned to action on a victory mode, winning the girls' Class A crown with a 3-over-par 75 in the recent Nike Jungolf Christmas Tournament at the tough Couples course of the Riviera Golf and Country Club in Silang, Cavite.

Agojo, who left the game for three months following her long US campaign to concentrate on her studies at OB Montessori, beat club bet Remijin Camping by three strokes. Katrina Gonzales placed third with an 85.

Nonoy Negrido, winner of the Fil-Am individual title, scored a 75 for a five-shot win over Justin Tam-bunting and IG Gutierrez in boys' Class A in the tourney sponsored by Nike through PacSports Phils.

Miko Yee and Bambi dela Paz prevailed in Class B, Sung Bi Yoon and Mia Piccio won in Class C, and Bino dela Paz and Ma-an Legaspi topped Class D.

AR Ramos upset the favorites to split Class E honors with Princess Superal. The special division trophies for 6-and-under went to Justin Dy and Dana Gonzales.

The 18-hole Nike event is part of the Samsung Jungolf Tour's holiday series organized by the Junior Golf



AGOJO: Winner by 3 shots

Foundation of the Philippines.

Samsung president and CEO Sang Yool Eom and Airlift Asia president Rico Brizuela, whose companies are major supporters of the jungolf program, graced the event together with Jungolf officials led by their president Gerry Handog.

Yee's 77 put him two strokes up on Korean Lee Ho In.

Dela Paz scored a 91 then nipped Debbie de Villa in the countback.

Sung (81) finished seven up on Moshe Baldo, while Wolen Juan Superal, playing in a new division after an unbeaten run in Class D last year, settled for third with a 91. Piccio (78) won over Crystal Superal.

Dela Paz was another countback winner after Miguel Tabuena squandered an early lead. Legaspi beat Cristina Potenciano by 14 shots.

Puerto Princesa hosting Athens boxing qualifier

By Dennis U. Eroa

THE COUNTRY'S search for the elusive Olympic gold medal got a boost following the confirmation of Palawan and Puerto Princesa City as host of the 22nd Asian Boxing First Olympic qualifying tournament.

Palawan Gov. Joel T. Reyes, Mayor Edward Hagedorn and Abap president Manny Lopez signed a memorandum of agreement recently designating Puerto Princesa as venue of the tournament which is expected to lure Asia's leading amateur boxers who are seeking berths for the 2004 Athens Olympics.

At least 25 countries are competing in the tournament to be held at the Puerto Princesa Coliseum on Jan. 10-18.

"It is with honor and pride that the city of Puerto Princesa and Palawan will host this gigantic gathering of Asia's leading boxers. We join hands in making sure that this event will

be a tremendous success," said Reyes and Hagedorn in a joint statement.

They expressed confidence that Filipino fighters will score victories in the tournament.

"Palawan and Puerto Princesa are active partners of the national passion for the Olympic gold. By hosting the qualifying, we are doing our humble share and at the same time promote the unspoiled beauty and warmth of Palawefios," they said.

Reyes and Hagedorn thanked the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) through Lopez for showing its confidence in the capability of Palawan and Puerto Princesa to host the international event.

Palawan and Puerto Princesa have successfully hosted various sporting events like the National Boxing Open, the International Sepak Takraw championships, the BIMP-EAGA Games and the Air21 Cycling Challenge.

BIS, La Salle-A stay unbeaten

BENEDICTINE International School dealt Harry's Up 2 with its first loss via a 62-60 decision yesterday to move on top of the 16-and-under Group B standings in the San Miguel Corp. Holiday Hoop Challenge at the La Salle Greenhills in San Juan.

Myke Foronda led BIS to a flawless 4-0 card with 19 points and John Foronda and Kenji Kanai added 12 points apiece in the team's biggest win so far in the tournament where the top two squads from each group advance to the cross-over

semifinals. It was Harry's Up 2's first setback in four games.

SBPPA and University of the Philippines Integrated School leveled their cards to 2-2 following victories over Merville (130-33) and St. Benedict (57-50), respectively.

SBPPA's Andrew Villareal and Jeff Libunao combined for 47 points to deal Merville its fourth straight loss.

Maui Villanueva led all scorers for UPIS with 20 points.

In the 13-and-under group, Nicolas Salva hit 27 points and Matthew

Sia added 13 as La Salle-A kept its mark perfect in Group B with a 98-37 rout of Harry's Up 2. It was La Salle-A's fourth win in a row, while dropping Harry's Up 2 to 2-2.

Jose Yambao had a game-high 32 points as SBPPA coasted to its third win in four games with a 67-48 bashing of NCE, also in Group B.

Lourdes School-Mandaluyong likewise evened up its card to 2-2 after whipping Dominican (1-3), 91-34, in this competition supported by the resources of some of SMC's major brands.

Christmas blessing on a bus to Subic

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad



came in the form of a sincere friendship.

Well, I would not say I did bump into a living saint, because that would sound exaggerated, OA.

All my new friend had requested was the window side of the bus, seat No. 32, which I was occupying.

Once settled, the tall, lovely, firmly built woman, a native of Holland, broke conversation, starting with the immortal deeds of Ho Chi Minh, whose book of poems, actually a prison diary, I had with me on the trip.

Upon being informed of the greatness of socialism, and how it could have worked wonders if this system had been applied in the Philippines, my friend agreed that the United States was both silly and naive in forcing Filipinos into democracy.

She nodded upon being told that RP was too young, immature to function as an effective democratic state.

She said yes, there would have been law

and order, no weird population explosion, no silly politicians to run and ruin the show. Oh, she agreed, there would have been a totally better life for most, if a firmer, stronger form of government, not a soft, loose democratic system, were in effect in the Philippines.

This lady, let's just call her by her initials, I.V., would reveal that she was first warned, and later reviled, after she decided to settle in RP in the Zambales area, with her husband, an engineer.

She did not hide the fact that she was taken aback once she finally got the chance to have a raw, first-hand feel of poverty in the Philippines.

She felt and tasted this among the Aetas from around San Marcelino, and farther up the mountains.

I.V. said she knew right away that the poor tribe is often despised and pushed around.

She told of a poor 18-year-old Aeta whose singular dream was to go to school and become a midwife.

She said the poor girl, while stressing poverty would not be a hindrance to success, wanted so much to help her people.

I.V. did not only help send the girl to school. After more stints among the Aetas, during which she discovered various health problems among them, I.V.

helped put up a foundation.

That foundation is currently in a team-up with several agencies, topped by United Laboratories which provides the Aetas free medicine, mainly iodine for the poor, short, dusky natives who often develop goiter.

Now, you must be wondering why I have strayed into this rather mountainous topic after having started out with Santa and poor Rudolph, the endangered reindeer.

It's because your reporter here has remained sincerely amazed about I.V.

She had a choice but she has decided to stay.

Repeat. I.V. did confess she felt very sick upon being exposed to poverty, illiteracy and disease, all described as immeasurable.

The kind thing is that she has refused to be cowed.

She did not sit down and just stare in frustration.

Of course, she's not the type who'd say she has been sent on a mission.

Instead, she took time out to state a borrowed lifetime motto, before getting off in Olongapo: "If you saved one life, you saved the world entire."

She wiped a tear from her calm eyes, shook my hands, and bade goodbye.

May we have more guests like her. May you all have a Blessed Christmas.



BENEDICTINE cagers flaunt their defense against Harry's Up 2.

IT'S the day before Christmas and, as everybody tries to have a memorable bite of the festivity cake, the leading message on the clogged RP TXT Hi-way comes from Santa's kitchen itself.

And it's not a very cheerful one, either.

It strictly defines the sad state of the economy.

Please share that text message, if you haven't as yet. Here:

"I never realized how bad things are until I spoke to Santa Claus on the phone.

'How's Rudolph?' I asked.

'Delicious,' Santa replied."

That holiday quip came from my kumpadre Mar Maralit, who said everything is set for the annual party and gift-giving on Saturday in honor of poor kids from the simple farms around Pangao, a cool, tree-filled barangay, still in Lipa but a lifetime away from Mayor Vi's cluttered city, where the choking vehicular traffic is a cruel trap daily.

The truth is that, despite the hard times, old friends again chipped in to ensure a continuation of the gift-giving tradition held every Dec. 27 in the front yard of a borrowed rest house in Pangao, which could be reached by car in an hour, if you start from Mandaluyong or Makati early enough.

My friends in Pangao, Gerry, Junior, Danny, Floy, Rene, etc., have got a long list of concerned chums, like Sen. Robert Jaworski, trader Lucio Yan, civic worker Nandy Charvet, Torres brandy distributors Arthur Reyes and Dr. Ruel of San Pablo City, who never fail to share the blessings of this season of warmth, love and tenderness with those poor kids.

The most heart-warming contribution, of course, came again from Olympian Narciso Bernardo, who did not hesitate to share, despite being limp, bed-ridden since suffering a stroke over two years ago.

This afternoon, our friend Peter Sing, a former newspaperman who's been named to the FPJ media team, will also distribute toys and goodies to poor children in our barangay in Vergara, Mandaluyong.

The affair will be held in a lot, now popularly known as the Vergara Riverside Park, which was lent to the barrio by businessman Ruperto Tan of Etteron Inc.

It's that time of the year and, naturally, gift-giving rites will be held and repeated in countless other localities hereabouts.

But, speaking of gifts, I actually had mine in advance, on Saturday to be exact, as I headed for a boxing event in Subic, Zambales, on board a Victory Liner bus.

The gift, which will be warmly treasured,

Lakers' Hollywood fall and rise steal the show



BRYANT

WASHINGTON—From sexual assault charges against star Kobe Bryant to their return to the top after being dethroned, the Los Angeles Lakers dominated National Basketball Association news in 2003.

An amazing 12-month span also saw Michael Jordan retire, LeBron James make a sparkling debut, Tim Duncan excel and Alonzo Mourning forced out by kidney disease.

But it was the Lakers' Hollywood fall and rise that stole the show.

The Lakers began the year seeking their fourth consecutive NBA crown but were ousted by eventual champion San Antonio in the second playoff round.

A sluggish season with injuries to star

center Shaquille O'Neal and Bryant left the Lakers in need of help and it came in the form of veteran free agent stars Gary Payton and Karl Malone, each hungry for their first NBA title.

But overshadowing that news came charges that Bryant, 25, brutally raped a teen woman in Colorado on June 30. Bryant could face life in prison if convicted in one of the most high-profile celebrity crime trials in history.

Bryant, who is married, insists he had consensual sex with the woman. He was arrested after turning himself in last July and is free on \$25,000 bail.

The turmoil surrounding Bryant appears not to have dimmed his competi-

tive fire on the court. On Dec. 19, Bryant endured a day in court, then flew to Los Angeles and hit a game-winning basket at the buzzer to beat Denver, 101-99.

The Lakers improved to an NBA-best 20-5 two days later by beating Phoenix, 107-101. Malone suffered a sprained right knee in the victory but has missed only 11 games in 19 NBA seasons.

O'Neal's inside domination, Payton's assists and leadership, Malone scoring and Bryant's playmaking have kept the Lakers a formidable foe even as the San Antonio Spurs showed they are of championship caliber as well.

Led by NBA Most Valuable Player Dun-

can and veteran David Robinson, the Spurs beat New Jersey four games to two in the NBA Finals last June, capturing their second title in five years.

Robinson's retirement forced the Spurs to make changes, but with Duncan leading the way, San Antonio went on a 10-game win streak in December to seize the Midwest division lead and signal they would threaten for the crown in 2004.

Duncan also led the United States into the Athens Olympics, topping all scorers in a qualifying tournament. Top US talent went unbeaten, restoring US honor after a humiliating three World Championship defeats by US NBA players. **AFP**

Rodman plays anew, plans return to NBA

LOS ANGELES—Dennis Rodman, the retired basketball great known for his off-court antics just as much as his on-court skills, has returned to the game with the Long Beach Jam of the fringe American Basketball Association (ABA).

Rodman, who announced in July that he wanted to return to professional basketball at the age of 42, is bidding to get into shape for a National Basketball Association comeback, his agent said on Monday.

"Our ultimate goal is to be

signed by an NBA team by the All-Star break in mid-February, if not sooner," Darren Prince said in a statement.

Rodman, who won five NBA championships in his career with the Detroit Pistons and the Chicago Bulls, left the league on a low note in March 2000 when he was released by the Dallas Mavericks after being with the team for less than a month.

During his tenure with the Mavericks, he was suspended once, ejected twice and also fined by the league. **Reuters**

Parker L'Equipe winner

PARIS—San Antonio Spurs basketball star Tony Parker was voted French Champion of Champions for 2003 by sports daily L'Equipe on Monday.

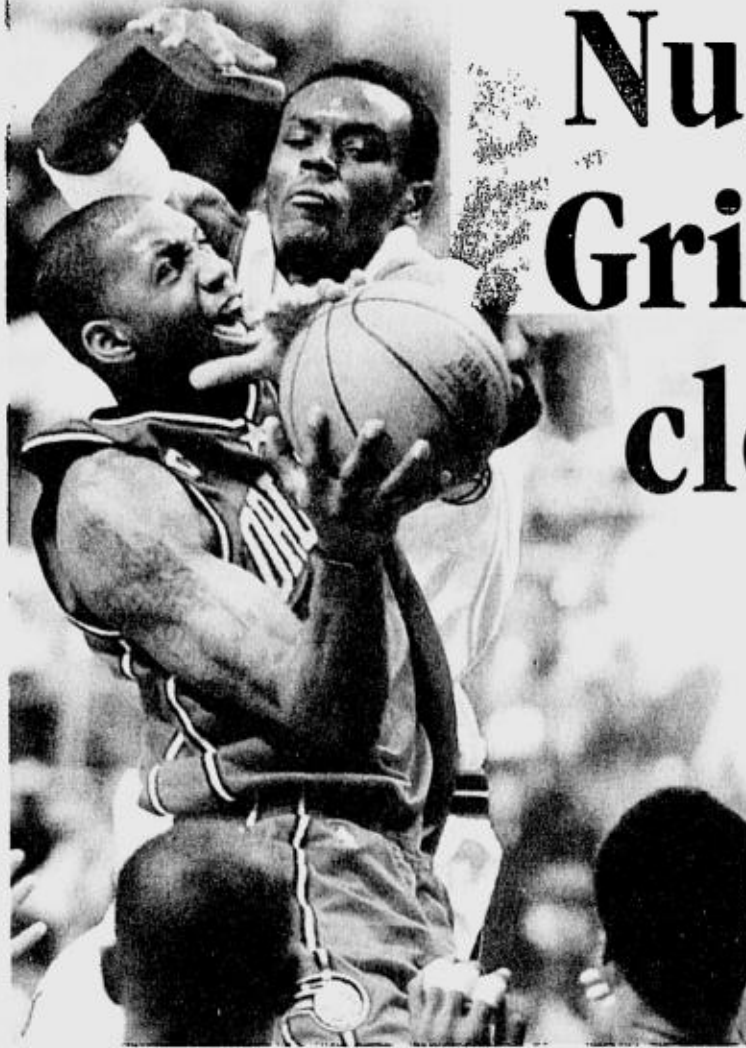
Parker, 21, the first basketball player to get L'Equipe's award, was rewarded for winning the NBA title with the Spurs this year.

Parker was picked in a poll of 145 L'Equipe journalists. The

newspaper called him "the symbol of a reinvigorated France."

Parker, the only Frenchman to have won an NBA title, said he was "extremely pleased."

"It's a nice reward for all the hard work I put in. I'm proud," Parker told L'Equipe, adding that he has become "a more complete player" under Spurs coach Gregg Popovich. **AP**



MCGRADY (left) is fouled on his way to the hoop by Samuel Dalembert during their NBA game Monday.

REUTERS

Nuggets dump Grizzlies; Jazz clobber Bulls

DENVER—Voshon Lenard scored 24 points and Andre Miller had 21 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Denver Nuggets to a 106-99 win over the Memphis Grizzlies in one of three games in the NBA on Monday.

Denver won its 17th game of the season, matching its win total for all of last season, as the Nuggets continued their surprising strong start to the season.

Nene Hilario added 16 points for the Nuggets, who shot 51 percent from the floor.

Rookie Carmelo Anthony added 15 points for the winners, who had six players in double figures.

Pau Gasol scored 24 points and added 14 rebounds for the Grizzlies (15-11), who are also among the

NBA's most-improved teams so far this season. James Posey added 20 points for Memphis.

In Philadelphia, Glenn Robinson had 22 points to lead the 76ers to a 95-73 win over the Orlando Magic.

In Chicago, Andrei Kirilenko had 26 points and a career-high 16 rebounds to lead the Utah Jazz over the Bulls 92-80.

Matt Harpring added 15 points and 14 rebounds for Utah, which finished a six-game road trip at 3-3. **Reuters**

Why not ice skating, duckpin in 2005 SEAG?

ASIDE from the medal-rich event of dancesport, there are other sports which can be a rich source of gold medals in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games which the Philippines is hosting. These are ice skating and duckpin bowling.

Equally important is the fact that local organizers won't be spending too much money and effort by including ice skating and duckpin bowling in the coming biennial games because there are already existing facilities for these sports.

For example, we have a modern skating rink at the SM Megamall for the ice skating competitions, not to mention that we also have in the national pool the best-trained, best-supported and best-equipped ice skaters, many of whom are multi-titled veteran internationalists.

Duckpin bowling, on the other hand, needs no further promotion. As a matter of fact, it is very popular among Filipinos who are addicted to it. Duckpin enjoyed tremendous following for many years until tenpin bowling took the country by storm in the 1970s when Paeng Nepomuceno started to dominate the bowling scene.

Dancesport is also heaven-sent in so far as the country's quest for gold medals is concerned. Why? Because there are simply so many events in both the Latin and Standard categories where our more experienced and superbly conditioned dance athletes could win the bulk of the gold, silver and bronze medals.

Since host countries of the SEA Games always get the "home court advantage" by adding new sports of their choices, Filipino organizers of the 2005 SEA Games should include events where our chances of winning the gold medal are much, much better.

Vietnam was the best example. As host of the just-ended SEA Games, it finished a strong and surprising first by including in the competitions the virtually unknown sports of fin swimming and shuttlecock where it won the bulk of its incredible harvest of 156 gold medals, 95 silver and 91 bronzes, to leave the others biting the dust.

WG&A BACKS RP FOOTBALL. All indications point to a long-lasting tieup between WG&A Superferry and the Philippine Football Federation after their officials recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement to promote public interest in football, which is considered to be

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo



"important for character formation, fighting spirit, team work, respect for others, self-discipline and basic education"—values that Superferry and the Abotiz Transport Group advocate and campaign for the Filipino youth.

"This new partnership augurs well for the sport," said outgoing PFF president lawyer Rene Adad after the signing of the MOA before a big group of football supporters that included PFF president Juan Miguel Romualdes, Faustino Lim and Ava Engel, WG&A chief resource officer, and Gina Virtusio, WG&A communications manager.

Kicking off the partnership will be the staging of the National Men's Championship in the Visayas region sometime in February next year and the Kasibulan 6-12 football clinic for kids aged 6 to 12.

Although football, a sport tailor-made for the medium-built Filipinos, hardly gets special treatment from the media unlike basketball which always gets top priority, football is still fortunate to receive the support of a private firm like WG&A. This example is worth emulating and illustrates that this country is not lacking in business firms with hearts of gold, business firms which are more than willing to share and give back to society what it has given to them.

Mark Aaron Flores is a living proof of how football changed his life. Now at 13, Mark Aaron is a high school freshman enjoying full academic scholarship as a member of the San Beda College football team.

"I see a lot of potential in Mark Aaron as a football player and I see him growing up to be a very disciplined person, taking with him good values he has acquired from the Kasibulan 6-12 clinic," said San Beda football head coach Aris Caslib.

On the other hand, Mark Aaron is just plain happy and grateful to have been given the opportunity to live his dream—to play football and study in a private school like San Beda College.

As for me, I am wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!

BLOCKBUSTER TRANSFER

Beckham biggest newsmaker

LONDON—Surprise, surprise: David Beckham, the most recognizable face in the world's most popular game, was the biggest newsmaker in international sports in 2003.

The England captain's blockbuster transfer from one global soccer powerhouse to another—Manchester United to Real Madrid—was voted the top sports story of the year in a world-wide poll of Associated Press subscribers.

The Beckham saga was a comfortable winner ahead of the doping scandals rocking the sports world, Michael Schumacher's record sixth Formula One title, Lance Armstrong's fifth straight Tour de France victory and England's World Cup rugby triumph.

Beckham received 15 first-place votes and garnered a total of 321 points out of 55 ballots

from sports editors and broadcasters on all continents—not counting the United States, which has its own survey.

Beckham already gets huge attention for his hairstyles, fashion statements, sponsorship ads and celebrity marriage to a former Spice Girl—not to mention his trademark free kicks and brilliant long-range passes.

But Beckham mania grew to a frenzy when news broke in June of his transfer from Manchester United, his home for 13 years, to glamorous nine-time European champion Madrid.

The deal went through, sending him to Madrid for 25 million pounds (US\$43 million). He joined a lineup of "Galacticos" including Ronaldo, Zinedine Zidane, Luis Figo, Roberto Carlos and Raul Gonzalez. **AP**



BECKHAM: \$43-million deal.

Top 12: The stories that defined the year in Sports

From page A19

face in an incident that shocked the local sporting world. Thanks to the quick help from several judo athletes who happened to be near during the incident and immediately brought him to the hospital, Go miraculously survived the attempt and went on with his usual tasks after getting out of the hospital. He hosted the final leg of the Asian Grand Prix and Asian Athletics championship and although he lost in his bid to get elected to the IAAF central board, GTK pursued his programs at the Patafa, which won the most gold medals by any NSA in Vietnam with eight.

5. RP trios wins gold; Hontiveros named FIQ chief.

The spark RP sports needed on the international arena came from Cecilia Yap, Liza del Rosario and Liza Clutario, who conquered the best in the globe to win the ladies' trios of the World Tenpin Bowling Championship in Malaysia. Clutario also won a silver in the women's Masters and a bronze in the all-events. To make the occasion even more memorable, Steve Hontiveros was named president of the International Bowling Federation.

6. Delasin strikes in LPGA Tournament of Champions

While Jennifer Rosales' search for a breakthrough win in the LPGA drew a lot of mileage, it was Dorothy Delasin who delivered as the two-time PSA Athlete of the Year awardee won the Tournament of Champions in Alabama. The daughter of a Filipino couple in Daly City in San Francisco beat a Korean in a sudden-death playoff to clinch only her third win in the ladies pro tour.

7. Drugs, Fil-Sham issues rock PBA

Several stars of the Philippine Basketball Association landed in the freezer as Eala pursued his no-nonsense effort to rid the league of drug cheats.

Among the big names fished out were Jimwell Torion, Jun Limpot, Davonn Harp and Dorian Peña. This triggered a near fallout with fans who eventually realized that Eala was doing the right things as far as plotting the future of the league is concerned. But the issue of the Fil-Shams remains unresolved as the Department of Justice sat on a recommendation by the Senate to deport crack Fil-Am players for faking their birth records. The biggest star among the Fil-Sham suspects is Asi Taulava of Talk 'N Text, who was named this year's PBA Most Valuable Player and pro player of the PSA.

8. The UAAP 'Holy War' that ended with a whimper

The drum-up for the event was nothing short of spectacular, but a repeat of any Ateneo-La Salle title series is one tough act to follow.

Far Eastern gate-crashed the party and put itself in the UAAP Finals and the Eagles spent themselves disposing of the Archers in the Final Four that they had none

left going into the title series.

The best-of-three Finals that pitted the Banal brothers, Joel and Koy, ended in a disaster for Joel, who saw his Ateneo side kicked around in the title series which the Tamaraws wrapped up with a couple of lopsided victories.

9. RP five next to last in ABC.

With his plea for reinforcements unanswered, Aric del Rosario went to China and almost finished at the bottom of the basketball ladder in Asia.

In a field of 16 teams, Del Rosario's Philippine squad made up of some commercial and collegiate players got the bombardment of its life in China, besting only one team, Malaysia, in the Asian Basketball Confederation tournament, the qualifier for the Olympics.

Del Rosario would get his redemption later in the year with the SEA Games gold medal, but that could hardly ease the pain when they came back home from China feeling like cage wrecks.

10. Tour ng Pilipinas revived

The bronze-skinned gladiators on wheels were on the road again after more than five years, competing for immortality and cash that came with it as FedEx revived the Tour ng Pilipinas.

For years the ultimate summer spectacle, the Tour came back and saw some of its old faces battling it out. Arnel Querimit won the revival edition with Team Tanduay, claiming his second such title after winning one when

Marlboro backed it in the past.

11. Eala convinces PBA board of new format

The 40-year-old former broadcaster successfully convinced the league's picky board of governors to depart from the usual three-conference format with a two-conference calendar starting next season. The two-conference format will also allow the league to participate in as many international events as possible, opening the doors for a return trip to the Olympics. Going into the books as the last three winners under the old set-up were Talk 'N Text in the All-Filipino, Alaska in the Invationals and Coca-Cola in the Reinforced. A revival of the old Crispa-Toyota rivalry also drew tremendous support from fans.

12. Lifestyle check on PSC officials

The Philippine Sports Commission got its taste of controversy as allegations of lavish-spending and corruption in its ranks under chair Eric Buhain's watch surfaced left and right. The presence of luxury cars and sporty SUVs at the PSC parking lot led to a call for a lifestyle check pursued by the House committee on youth and sports under former PSC commissioner and now Rep. Monico Puentevella. Sources said Buhain nearly lost his job after the PSC was involved in importing racehorses, allegedly at the behest of Presidential son and Pampanga vice governor Mikee Arroyo, from Australia.

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HOST: How come the case hasn't been solved until now? It's been weeks already!

Co-host: The problem is, even if the police investigators are really trying, wala silang ma-pin-point, kasi hindi pa natatagpuan ang patay na bangkay. (Double dead!)

Host: What about this other case, involving drug-pushing?

Co-host: Ah, the culprit has already been found.

Host: Sino siya?

Co-host: Nagtitinda siya ng shabu—very rampant siya!

(Ah, so...)

Host: What's so interesting about the central character in your new movie?

Guest: He's not just the usual policeman assigned to solve a crime. It's easier for him, kasi meron siyang sidekick powers. (Malakas sumipal!)

Quizmaster: Who's your favorite superhero?

Contestant: Captain Americal

Quizmaster: What about you?

Contestant 2: Barangay captain!

(To each his own...)

Host: Please tell our viewers why it's important for them to protect the environment.

Guest: It's important, because if they do not, this beautiful place that is our world will turn into a pile of crumble!

(Oh, wow!)

Host: Why does your brother have so many loyal fans?

Guest: Because they have a highly respect for him! (We wonder why!)

Host: What do you have to say

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre



about the former girlfriend of your best friend, who is saying shocking things about him these days?

Guest: To her, I say: Why you making a point destroying him completely, is that love?

(No, but it's great, bitchy, sadistic fun!)

Host: Is there any possibility that they can kiss and make up?

Guest: Yes, but not by attacking each other on TV. They should talk this matter beyond the scenes!

(That's beyond us...)

Host: What's the latest development in the murder case you are following up?

Field reporter: Sorry, pero nawalan sila ng leads.

Host: Bakit daw?

Field reporter: Hindi ma-identify 'yung suspect, 'yung T-shirt lang na naka-white. (Ano raw?)

Host: Are there any other suspects?

Field reporter: May nagsabi that is also may involves a government official, is a mayor! (Is very confusing!)

Host: Can you tell them what the grand prize is in your organization's charity draw on the show today?

Guest: Of course. A lucky audience goes home with a

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LORD OF THE RINGS 2 "TWO TOWERS" GP 2:30, 6:00	LOST ISLAND R18 12:20, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY PG13 1:00, 3:05, 5:10, 7:15

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.



MODEL/HOST Hans Montenegro is one of the stars in the Cream Silk caravan.

'Cream Silk Make-over Day'

CREAM Silk celebrated "Cream Silk National Hair Make-Over Day" simultaneously at SM North Edsa in Quezon City, SM City Cebu and at the PTA Grounds in Davao, and on three other dates in Naga, Baguio, Tarlac and Bataan.

Cream Silk endorses

er Lea Salonga led the performances, which also featured Ogie Alcasid, Geneva Cruz, Rachel Alejandro, Ky-la, Roselle Nava, Luke Mejares, Jay-R, Christine Bersola and TJ Manotoc, Gabby Eigenmann, and Power 4. Women queued for their turn to experience the Cream Silk hair make-over in the three areas.

ience the Cream Silk hair make-over in the three areas.

Sidekick powers, rampant drug dealer and other...

From page A28

brand-new TV set.
(Lucky audience—of one?)

Host: Your former girlfriend says that you are the father of her baby.
Guest: No, only after we broke up, she was pregnant with another man!
(The baby was bad enough!)

Christmas wishes

THIS Christmas Eve, let's pray that the Christ child finds a warm and sheltering manger in our hearts, despite all of the noise, distractions and commercial hubbub that make it so hard for us to remember what this blessed season is really all about.

We're all so busy these days—shopping for gifts, wrapping them, coping with the holiday traffic, decorating our homes, preparing the midnight feast—but let's make time for Jesus

on his birthday.

A quiet hour with Him will give us a chance to express our love and gratitude. As for his love for us, it's always there, but

we often take it for granted. This Christmas, let's value it for the priceless treasure it is.

Have a happy, holy Christmas, everyone!

Stargazing at Glorietta Cinemas

Featuring the Cast of **Filipinas**

Have your picture taken & signed by the stars! Plus win exciting prizes!

December 28 (Sunday), 2003
4:00 PM - GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY
5:00 PM - GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY

FILIPINAS OPENS DECEMBER 25 AT AYALA CINEMAS

Araneta Center

ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

ALI 1	GENIE, BAKIT?
ALI 2	ALIPIN
ALI 3	CABIN FEVER
ALI 4	LOST ISLAND
ALI 5	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
ALI 6	INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
ALI 7	MYSTIC RIVER

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DEC 25	DISNEY ON ICE - 4:30PM / 8:00PM
DEC 26	DISNEY ON ICE - 4:30PM / 8:00PM
DEC 27	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
DEC 28	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
DEC 29	DISNEY ON ICE - 4:30PM / 8 PM
DEC 30	DISNEY ON ICE - 1PM / 4:30PM / 8PM
JAN 1	DISNEY ON ICE - 4:30PM / 8 PM

FOR TICKETS, CALL TICKETNET AT 911-6955

THEATER

MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPTAY
CORONET A	ALIPIN
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	LIBERATED
B	AKO, IKAW, SIYA
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BAGAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOORS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

MARS RAVELO'S

CAPTAIN BARBELL

Directed by Mac C. Alejandro

Opens on Christmas Day 2003

Official Entry to the 29th Metro Manila Film Festival.

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Josh Groban gets 'Closer' to music lovers with new album

The Biggest Drama Event of the Year!

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Dawn Zulueta • Aiko Melendez
Victor Neri • Wendell Ramos
Raymond Bagatsing • Andrea del Rosario
Sunshine Dizon • Tanya Garcia
Anne Curtis • Mikel Campos
and Armida Siguion-Reyna

introducing

Sarah Geronimo

Filipinas

Pelikula ni Joel Lamangan



Opens December 25 • Official Entry to the MMFF 2003

VIVA
FILMS
A DIVISION OF VIVA PRODUCTIONS, INC.

JOSH Groban gets closer to his Filipino fans with his new album, "Closer," as the singing sensation lends his heart and soul to his latest album, available now from Warner Music Philippines.

After a successful first album, which hit double platinum with 60,000 copies sold in the Philippines alone, Groban's second album doesn't fall short of the young singer's reputation.

"Closer" carries angelic and exhilarating symphonies complemented by Groban's unmatched vocal prowess.

Already considered the fastest selling album since its release, and shooting all the way to the No. 1 spot at O Music and Video, Tower Records and Music One charts, "Closer" continues to bring out the best in the 20-year-old Groban, who sings an unlikely mix of pop and opera.

Unlike the US release, the exclusive Philippine version of "Closer" has the popular classic "She's Out of My Life," which was originally included in the special Josh Groban DVD.

The compilation also includes soon-to-be classics such as "Broken Vow," "You Raise Me Up," "Oceano," "Never Let Go," "Si Volvieras a Mi," "Per pe," "Caruso," "My Concession," "Remember When It Rains," "Hymne a l'amour," "Mi Manchaera," "When You Say Love Me," and "All Improviso Amore."

"Closer" is available from Warner Music Philippines in CDs and cassettes.



McKNIGHT

BEDINGFIELD

'Because of You' and other soothing music

MORE than 60 minutes of easy listening is offered by the CD "Dreamsounds (The Album)," released by Universal Music Philippines (UMP) in cooperation with Wave 89.1.

"Dreamsounds (The Album)" has soft rhythms and soothing symphonies of R&B hits, including "Because of You" which was popularized by Keith Martin. The song's appearance in this album is the first and only official release in the Philippine market.

Inspired by the radio program of the same title on Wave 89.1, the album carries some of the most requested songs of the show: "Home" (Brian McKnight), "Make Me Whole" (Amel Larrieux), "For You" (Kenny Lattimore) and "If You're Not the One" (Acoustic by Daniel Bedingfield).

Completing the UMP-Wave 89.1 compilation are "Don't Change" (Musique), "I Won't Cry" (Proflye), "Negative Things" (Selwyn), "All My Love" (InnerVoices), "I'll Wait Right Here," (Jersey Ave.), "Something to See," (Glenn Lewis), "You First Believed," (Hoku), "Missing You" (Bedtime remix-Case), "You're the One I Love," (Jesse Powell), and "I'm Sorry" (3rd Storee).

Sample tracks of the album are aired daily over Wave 89.1 on the radio program "Dreamsounds" from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

To promote the album, Wave 89.1 is hosting Lord Of The Rings 2 Walk In the Movie series at Eastwood City Walk on Dec. 27, and Wave's yearend party at the Eastwood City Walk on Dec. 31.

Sarah... From page A31

role in "Filipinas," Sarah will also be seen in another MMFF entry, Premiere Productions' "Captain Barbell," released through Viva Films, and soon in the Jolina Magdangal star-

rer, "Annie B."

In live concerts, Sarah is scheduled to stage a follow-up to her successful Music Museum shows, "Popstar ... A Dream Come True," at the Ynares Center in Antipolo City on Sunday, Dec. 28.

To perform with her in the show are Jay-R, Mark Bautista, and the Viva Popstars.

Tickets are available at all SM Ticketnet outlets, Araneta Ticketnet, Video City Antipolo, Rejoice Supermarket (Lorres, Antipolo) and Viva Concerts Office.

Stargazing at Glorietta 1 Cinemas

featuring the cast of
FANTASTIC MAN

Hear THOR sing the theme song of Fantastic Man!
Have your picture taken & signed by the stars!
Plus win exciting prizes!

December 26 (Friday), 2003
5:00 PM
GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY

FANTASTIC MAN OPENS DECEMBER 25 AT AYALA CINEMAS

VIC SOTTO
FANTASTIC MAN

DOOLBY
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FILMS

Stargazing at Glorietta 1 Cinemas

featuring RICA PERALEJO of
MALIKMATA

HANDA KA NA BANG MATAKOT?
Have your picture taken & signed by Rica!
Hear MAEGAN AGUILAR sing the theme song of Malikmata! Plus win exciting prizes!

DECEMBER 26 (Friday) 3:00 PM
GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA LOBBY

MALIKMATA OPENS DECEMBER 25 AT AYALA CINEMAS

AYALA CINEMAS
Distributed by
OctoArts
FILMS
CANARY FILMS
PRELIMINATION
DOOLBY
DIGITAL
SDDS

SHOW
STOPPER

GERONIMO

Sarah
is good,
says
Maricel

RISING pop star Sarah Geronimo is tickled pink to know that no less than Diamond Star Maricel Soriano has predicted a very bright future for her in show business.

"Nagagalangin ako sa kanya," said the multiawarded Maricel, who plays Sarah's aunt in Viva Films' Metro Manila filmfest entry, "Filipinas," where the young singer is being introduced as the daughter Richard Gomez leaves behind when he and his three other children migrate to the US.

"Malayo ang mararating ng batang 'yan," Maricel added. "Fourteen lang siya, 'di ba? For someone like Sarah who's making her first movie, mahusay siya. Bibilib ka sa kanya. Maaaring ang ibang tao may iba pang expectations sa kanya, pero para sa akin, okay na okay siya."

Maricel recalled that while shooting "Filipinas," she and co-stars Richard, Dawn Zulueta, Armida Siguion-Reyna, Victor Neri, Aiko Melendez and Raymond Bagatsing, among others, requested the "Star for a Night" winner to sing, a capella.

"Napanganga kaming lahat sa kanya," Maricel said. "Bakit ganun ang boses niya, parang may kasamang instrumento? Nakakatuwa talaga si Sarah. She's really very nice and very gifted."

Among the cast members, Sarah gets the chance to shine brightest in the "Filipinas" trailer, which shows her moment with her returning father, Richard.

The dramatic scene gave a hint of Sarah's promise as an actress.

"Hindi naman po," the young singer said when told of this. "Nagkataon lang na nadala ako sa eksena ko with Richard Gomez. Tinanong ko kasi siya doon sa scene kung bakit niya ako kinailangang iwan, kaya super drama at iyak ang ginawa namin."

"Noong una, siyempre nerbyos na nerbyos po ako nang kukunin 'yung eksena 'yon, pero salamat kina direkt Joel Lamangan at sa lahat ng co-stars ko dahil very supportive sila sa akin at binigyan nila ako ng pointers para maibigay ko 'yung tamang emotion."

Aside from her
SARAH/A30

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INTRODUCING ALICIA MAYER

GUEST STARS
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REZ CORTEZ
ALLAN K.
JIMMY SANTOS
SEX BOMB

ALSO STARRING
ROMY DIAZ • DICK ISRAEL
HANETTE INVENTOR
MARISSA SANCHEZ • MIKO SOTTO
PJ MALONZO • VALERIE CONCEPCION

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM OCTOARTS-ORBIT MUSIC

DIRECTED BY
TONY Y. REYES, DGPI

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2003
GRAND OPENING TOMORROW

MTRCB RATING G GENERAL PATRONAGE ALL AGES ADMITTED

ARA MINA AS DIABOLIKA
MICHAEL V. AS Prof. JAMES

DIRECTED BY
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GRAND OPENING TOMORROW

THE EPIC TRADITION CONTINUES
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TOLENTINO PADILLA AQUINO SANTOS VILLARROEL MANALO
COGIE DOMINGO RICHARD GUTIERREZ ZOREN LEGASPI ALESSANDRA DE ROSSI KARYLLE CHYNNA ANGEL
ORTALEZA ORTALIZA LOCSIN

A FILM BY ERIC MATTI

OPENS DECEMBER 25

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THE MOST HORRIFYING FILM OF 2003MTRCB RATING PG-13 Parental Guidance 13 - (Children below thirteen (13) years of age shall be allowed only if accompanied by a parent or an adult.)
This movie contains scary scenes that may not be suitable for very young viewers. parental guidance is proposed

MARVIN AGUSTIN DINGDONG DANTES
RICKY DAVAO WOWIE DE GUZMAN ANNA CAPRI NIKKI VALDEZ MS. BARBARA PEREZ

RICA PERALEJO

HANDA KA NA BANG MATAKOT?

DIRECTED BY JOSE JAVIER REYES dgpi

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2003
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM OCTOARTS-ORBIT MUSIC

GRAND OPENING TOMORROW

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PRESENTS

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 THE GRUDGE	1 MYSTIC RIVER	1 BALZAC	1 ELF	1 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
2 LOST ISLAND	2 THE GRUDGE	2 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2	2 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY	2 MYSTIC RIVER
3 CABIN FEVER	3 PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN	3 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2	3 LORD OF THE RINGS 2	3 ELF
4 OUT OF TIME	4 MYSTIC RIVER	4 REGINE VELASQUEZ	4 SCARY MOVIE 3	4 UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN
	5 SCARY MOVIE 3	5 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2	5 MYSTIC RIVER	5 JEEPERS CREEPERS 2

For screening times, call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice. Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 and send to 2333. Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
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EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

Filinvest	GOTESCO CINEMA	CINEMA 2000
1 CABIN FEVER	1 Gotesco City (Manila) tel 734.8588	1 ALIPIN
2 MASTER AND COMMANDER	2 BIKTIMA	2 AS BOOBS
3 LOONEY TUNES	3 LOST ISLAND	3 THE PHONE
4 OUT OF TIME	4 JEANIE BAKIT NGAYON KALANG	4 RUGRATS THE MOVIE
5 JEEPERS CREEPERS-2	5 HUWAG KANG KIKIBO	5 WISHER
6 WRONG TURN	6 AS BOOBS	6 CABIN FEVER
7 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY	7 Gotesco Grand Central (Calocan) tel 364.3781	7 MR. BONES
8 LOST ISLAND	8 BIKTIMA	
9 ELF	9 MR. SUAVE	
10 THE GRUDGE-1	10 CHAVIT SINGSON STORY	
	11 LOST ISLAND	
	12 ALIPIN	
	13 CABIN FEVER	
	14 HUWAG KANG KIKIBO	
	15 JEANIE BAKIT NGAYON KALANG	
	16 AS BOOBS	
	17 Gotesco Commonwealth (Manila) tel 951.0083	
	18 ALIPIN	
	19 HUWAG KANG KIKIBO	
	20 JEANIE BAKIT NGAYON KALANG	
	21 INTERNET QUEEN	
	22 AS BOOBS	
	23 Gotesco Ortigas (Manila) tel 656.6795	
	24 AS BOOBS	
	25 JEANIE BAKIT NGAYON KALANG	
	26 HUWAG KANG KIKIBO	
	27 BIKTIMA	
	28 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY	
	29 Universal (Manila) tel 733.2470	
	30 RESERVE	
	31 Dilson (Manila) tel 734.7724	
	32 BIKTIMA	
	33 Dilson (Lungsod)	
	34 Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856	
	35 ALIPIN	
	36 JEANIE BAKIT NGAYON KALANG	
	37 AS BOOBS	
	38 RESERVE	
	39 Isetann Cinemas Complex Recto SUPER CINERAMA tel 733.4238	
	40 LOST ISLAND	
	41 ALIPIN	
	42 HUWAG KANG KIKIBO	
	43 JEANIE BAKIT NGAYON KALANG	
	44 AS BOOBS	
	45 Berma Cinema (Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029	
	46 LIBERATED	
	47 MR. SUAVE	
	48 THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT	
	49 Araneta	
	50 MALL CINEMPLEX 7	
	51 JEANIE BAKIT NGAYON KALANG	
	52 ALIPIN	
	53 MASTER & COMMANDER	
	54 LORD OF THE RING	
	55 JEEPER CREEPERS	
	56 CABIN FEVER	
	57 LOST ISLAND	
	58 Jade Cinema (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03	
	59 STAR RUNNER	
	60 GOOD BOY	
	61 MYSTIC RIVER	
	62 JEEPER CREEPERS	
	63 Cine Nepo (Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121	
	64 STAR RUNNER	
	65 GOOD BOY	
	66 JEEPER CREEPERS	
	67 MYSTIC RIVER	
	68 Cine Nepo (Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489	
	69 COLD CREEK MANOR	
	70 OUT OF TIME	
	71 JEEPER CREEPERS	
	72 ALIPIN	
	73 Mega Center Mall (Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283	
	74 COLD CREEK MANOR	
	75 AKO, IKAW, SIYA	
	76 OUT OF TIME	
	77 STAR RUNNER	
	78 Cabuyao (Laguna City) tel 520.8914	
	79 SOON TO OPEN	
	80 Fiesta World Mall (Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790	
	81 ALIPIN	
	82 INTOLERABLE CRUELTY	
	83 DARK BLUE	
	84 GOOD BOY	
	85 Emperor (Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657	
	86 BALAT SIBUYAS	
	87 MASTER & COMMANDER	
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More
 Entertainment
 stories in
 Section C



F4 fans who cannot afford the tickets that cost more than P3,000 have to make do with a giant screen in the open field—or get refunds for their lower-priced tickets, according to one of two marketing arms handling the Dec. 26 show of the Taiwanese superstars.

Only 9,000 people can watch F4 concert live

By Marinel R. Cruz

ONLY people carrying tickets worth P3,000 to P5,000 will be allowed to watch the Taiwanese quartet F4 perform inside the Philsports Arena in Pasig City on Dec. 26, according to a concert consultant.

Those holding tickets that cost less than P3,000 will have to make do with watching Jerry Yan, Vanness Wu, Vic Zhou and Ken Zhu on a wide screen at the open field outside the arena, said Susan Lim of Big Slim Entertainment.

Contrary to an earlier report, Boy Abunda's Backroom Inc. is not involved in the promotion of the concert. The promoter is Mega Media of Joed Serrano.

The Philsports Arena is usually used during basketball games.

The "F4 Live Happy New Year 2004" was originally set at the Port open field in Taguig, which can accommodate 30,000. The Philsports

Arena (formerly Ultra) has a seating capacity of only 9,000, said Lim.

Tickets to the concert are P20,000, P15,000, P10,000, P8,000, P7,500, P5,000, P3,000, P2,500, P1,500 and P600.

"The Ultra has allowed the use of the football field bleachers to accommodate general admission ticket-holders," Lim said on Monday.

Those who wish to get refunds for their tickets can go to any Ticketnet office, Lim added.

Chito Cabalu of East West Global Entertainment last Saturday backed out as co-producer of the F4 concert, saying Taiwanese producer DaiBei Productions Inc. failed to come up with the money to finance the show.

Cabalu also said DaiBei Productions failed to get the working permits for the performers and to comply with the security requirements for a show at The Fort.

Lawrence Lo of DaiBei Productions

said he was able to secure all the necessary working papers last Monday morning.

"I cannot cancel the show because I've already made a commitment with the F4 and their fans, who will be coming from Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong," said Lo.

Jerry and Vic were guests in the "Happy 50TV" concert of ABS-CBN last Nov. 29, also at the Fort Bonifacio open field. Vanness and Ken performed at the Philsports football field last September.

In their Dec. 26 show, the pop idols from Taiwan will sing their hit singles "Can't Lose You," "Season of Fireworks," and "Can't Help Fallin'" from the phenomenally popular chinovela "Meteor Garden," shown on week nights on ABS-CBN.

"F4 Live! Happy New Year 2004" will be the first time in two years that all four members are performing in one show together. They are expected to arrive in Manila on Christmas Day.

Metro Manila Film Festival opens in Cagayan de Oro and other parts

By Grace C. Albasin
 PDI Mindanao Bureau

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The 29th Metro Manila Film Festival formally opened here last Saturday with a parade of the stars and a preview of the participating movies.

Eight of the nine entries in the film fest were screened Saturday night at the cinemas of the Limketkai and SM malls here.

For the first time in the festival's

history, the participating movies are opening simultaneously in Metro Manila and other parts of the country.

Previewed were Jeffrey Jeturian's "Bridal Shower" starring Dina Bonnevie, Cherry Pie Picache and Francine Prieto; Erik Matti's "Gagamboy" starring Navarro and Aubrey Miles; Matti's "Mano Po 2," Susan Rocas, Kris Aquino, Lorna Tolentino, Judy Ann Santos and many others; Tony Reyes' "Fantastic Man," Vic Sotto, Ara Mina, Cindy Kurleto, Michael

V; Joey Javier Reyes' "Malikmata," Rica Peralejo, Gloria Romero and Jericho Rosales; Gil Portes' "Homecoming," Alessandra de Rossi, Elizabeth Oropesa, Bembol Roco; Eric Meilly's "Crying Ladies," Sharon Cuneta, Hilda Koronel, Angel Aquino, Eric Quizon, Ricky Davao; Joel Lamangan's "Filipinas," Maricel Soriano, Richard Gomez, and many others; and Cirio Santiago's and Mac Alejandre's "Captain Barbell," Bong Revilla, Rufa Mae Quinto, Ogie Alcasid.

Traffic in the city had to be rerouted as spectators crowded the streets to take a closer look at their favorite stars in the parade, such as Bonnevie, Alcasid and Quinto.

Mayor Vicente Emano said the event has been eagerly awaited not only by Cagayan de Oro City residents but also by people in nearby provinces.

Emano said the staging of the film-fest here was a rare opportunity for the people of Northern Mindanao to see their favorite movie stars.

Councilor Michelle Tagarda told the INQUIRER that the event's sponsors, particularly business firms here, spent about P1.3 million on the visit of the movie stars for accommodations, security and logistics.

Police and the military sent personnel to help in securing the city during the event.

Fun Fun Christmas with Santa!
Meet & Greet Santa Claus at Dreamscape!
December 25, 26, 27 & 28, 2003
Dreamscape Center Stage Area
12nn to 1pm; 2pm to 3pm
4pm to 5pm
 Lots of Yuletide activities also await everybody starting December 16, 2003 up to January 1, 2004.
 Christmas carols, kiddie shows, musical stage plays, mini concerts, mascots and more!

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 EDSA corner Ortigas Avenue, Quezon City
 For more inquiries, please call 8317094 (Customer Service)
 636 2911 or 633 7641 local 193-200 (Ad & Promo)

Admission ticket required

BUSINESS

Singapore bourse keen on acquiring 30% stake in PSE

By Elena R. Torrijos

THE SINGAPORE Stock Exchange is interested in acquiring a 30-percent stake in the Philippine Stock Exchange on condition that there would be dual-border listing between the two exchanges, an official of the PSE said.

While local brokers would have welcomed the Singapore exchange as a strategic partner, the proposed condition has not sat well with a number of brokers who fear they would lose business, which has traditionally consisted of orders by foreign clients.

"We will turn it down if they insist because most of the fund managers are based in Singapore and 70 percent of our market are foreign orders," a local broker said in a separate interview. "If they want to invest, good, but dual listing must not be made as a pre-condition."

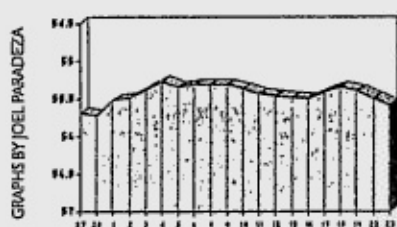
The broker doubted that local groups wanting to invest in Singapore-listed companies could make up for the loss of business from foreign clients. He noted that most overseas investments of locals comprised mostly of fixed-income instruments rather than equities.

The broker also disclosed that the Singapore

SINGAPORE/B2

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NOVEMBER DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

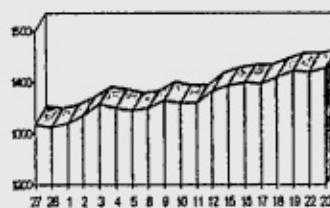
P 55.59 = \$1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 23, 2003

Y 107.63 = \$1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 22, 2003

GOLD: \$408.90-409.40
per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 23, 2003

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B8)

Stocks end up



STOCKS ended higher yesterday as players continued to window-dress their portfolios before the long holiday season.

The Philippine main index gained 6.37 points or 0.45 percent to 1,427.40 points. The market is up 40.16 percent so far this year.

"There's still moderate window-dressing. We still expect some pockets of buying in the next sessions that might push the market to a year-to-date high of 1,435," said BPI Securities investment analyst Spencer Yap.

Turnover dropped to P273.8 million from Monday's P681.6 million. Gainers beat losers 38 to 16 and there were 41 stocks unchanged.

Ayala Corp., the country's largest conglomerate with interests in banking, property and telecommunications, rose 1.92 percent or 10 centavos to P5.30.

Bank of the Philippine Islands, the country's second-largest lender and a unit of Ayala Corp., ended 1.09 percent higher at P46.50.

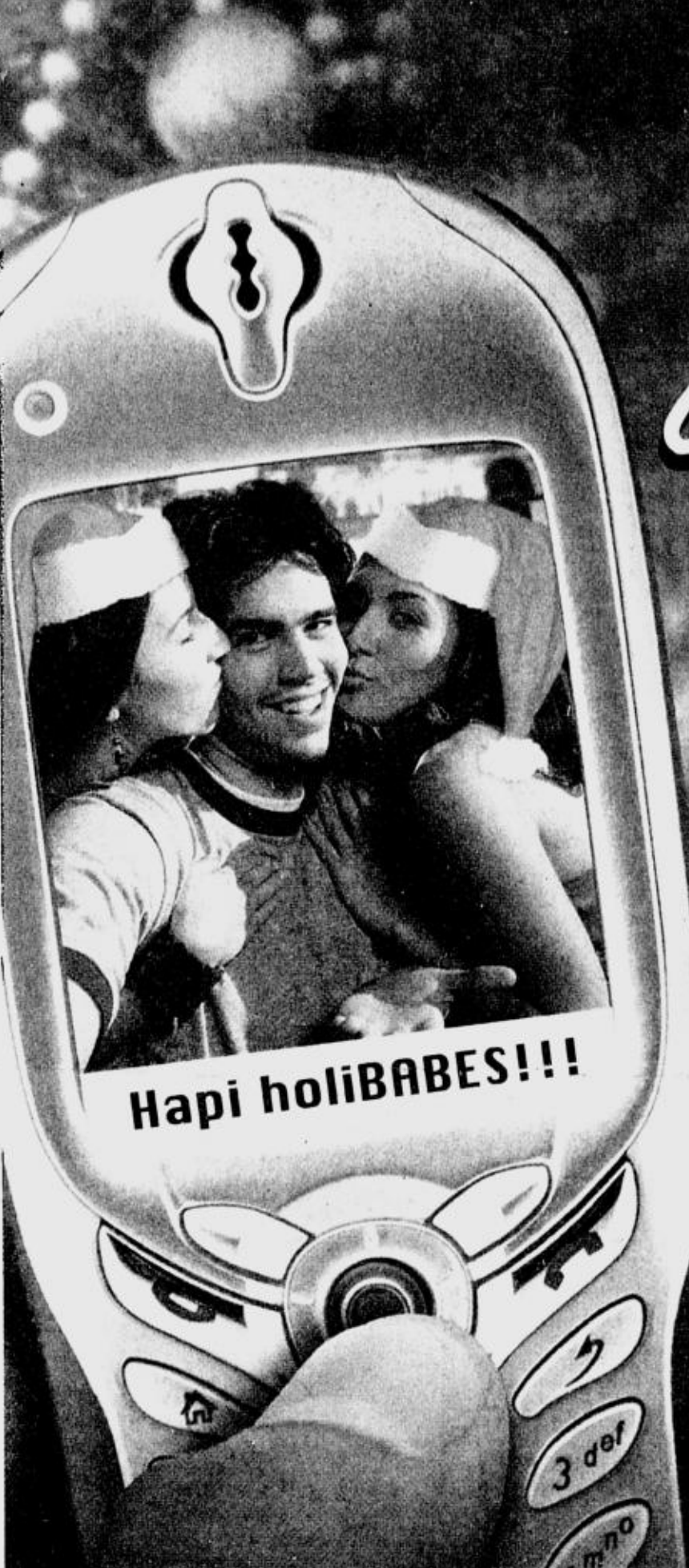
Jollibee Foods Corp., the largest fastfood chain widely expected to gain from election-related spending next year, rose 2.86 percent or 50 centavos to P18.

Power distributor Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) gained after energy regulators denied requests from consumer and business groups for it to recall an order allowing Meralco to hike its rates from January. Reuters

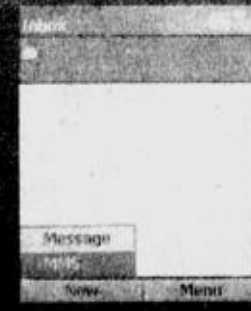
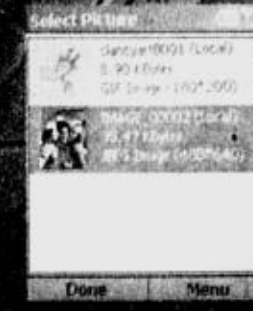
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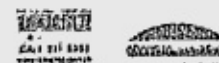
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BUSINESS

PNOC-EC sells part of 10% stake in Malampaya natural gas project

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PNOC Exploration Corp. has scheduled the sale of 49 percent of its 10-percent share in the \$2-billion Malampaya natural gas production project on Feb. 4.

In a notice to investors, PNOC-EC privatization committee chair Nelson B. Bayot Sr. directed parties interested for prequalification to contact the firm's financial adviser ING Bank NV-Investment Banking Group, which has offices in Makati City and Hong Kong.

Interested investors have until Jan. 5 to obtain relevant documents and information on the Malampaya shares.

The Malampaya natural gas project involves the extraction of natural gas from the field off northwest Palawan to fuel power plants with a capacity about 3,000 megawatts.

"Agents, brokers, advisers and other persons acting independent of any direct bidder will not be entertained," Bayot said.

"Only authorized representatives of bona fide bidders bearing authorization letters will be entertained," he added.

The deadline for submission of pre-qualification requirements was set on Jan. 6 while that for bids was set on Feb. 4.

Last month, PNOC-EC said in a report to the Philippine Stock Exchange that a partnership between two Indonesian firms had concluded their joint due diligence relevant to the privatization of the Malampaya shares.

The company said Medco Energy International and Expan Nusantara finished appraising data on the stocks for sale last Nov. 7.

Industry reports show that as of July, Medco was reviewing 11 petroleum blocks that

mostly belong to non-Indonesian companies. Expan, on the other hand, is one of leading bulk suppliers of natural gas in the petroleum-rich country.

PNOC-EC, the oil exploration arm of the Philippine National Oil Co., has a 10-percent stake in the project while Shell Exploration Philippines BV and ChevronTexaco Malampaya have 45 percent each.

In a disclosure to the PSE last month, PNOC-EC said 12 foreign firms were interested in taking part in the privatization of the Malampaya shares.

Back then, the 12 companies received copies of a confidentiality agreement but only three of them had so far signed the document.

Interest in the Malampaya shares came after an international roadshow that covered Indonesia, Thailand, South Korea and Japan.

PNOC, PetroEnergy ink deal with Petronas

PNOC Exploration Corp. and PetroEnergy Resources Corp. have signed a farm-in agreement with Petronas Carigali Overseas Sdn Bhd to jointly explore for oil and gas in offshore Mindoro.

Petronas Carigali is a unit of Malaysian oil and gas giant Petroliam Nasional Bhd.

The Mindoro exploration block is currently covered by geophysical survey and exploration contract (GSEC) No. 100 with the Department of Energy, which would expire on Jan. 13.

In a statement, Philippine National Oil Co.'s exploration arm said the three partners would file for a new service contract (SC) to replace GSEC 100.

The proposed SC for offshore Mindoro would have a seven-year exploration period, where the partners commit to drill one

exploratory well and an optional well in the area.

Rufino Bomasang, PNOC-EC president and chief executive, said:

"We see a strategic combination of the Petronas' technical and financial resources with the local exploration experience of PNOC-EC, (which is) involved in oil and gas activities across the Philippines."

The offshore Mindoro block is PNOC-EC's most attractive exploration acreage in terms of petroleum potential, with a well drilled in 1994 called Maniguin 2 being considered the most significant oil discovery outside of northwest Palawan.

PNOC-EC said offshore Mindoro was situated in the same petroleum province as northwest Palawan, location of the country's commercially producing oil and gas fields. **Ronnel W. Domingo**

RP open to new round of talks with Korea

By Abigail L. Ho

THE PHILIPPINES has not closed its door to forging an air pact with Korea despite the breakdown in the last round of talks.

Civil Aeronautics Board executive director Tomas Manalac revealed in an interview Monday that members of the Philippine panel were still in touch with their Korean counterparts through the Korean Embassy here.

"We're still talking, although unofficially," he told reporters.

CAB deputy executive director Carmelo Arcilla said in a separate interview that the Philippine panel was only waiting for the Korean panel to be "more flexible" and agree to again sit down for negotiations.

"We didn't really have that hard a stance on our demands, in the sense that we were willing to compromise. But the Koreans

were not in a very compromising mood at that time," he said.

"The relationship between us remains congenial and friendly, however. Everything is open. We don't close doors, we don't burn bridges. It's just a matter of time. Maybe the next time around, they'll be more flexible," he added.

Negotiations for additional Seoul entitlements bogged down Nov. 27 when the South Korean panel refused to grant the Philippine panel's request to change how entitlements were counted from frequencies to seats.

Philippine negotiators wanted to use seats as a measure because the Philippines used smaller planes compared to the Korean wide-bodied jets.

Arcilla said the Philippine panel, while willing to take a compromise position, was looking out for the Philippines' best interest.

THE BOARD of Prudential Bank extended the term of the following employees on a contractual basis up to Dec. 31, 2004: Senior vice president A. Benedicto Santos and vice presidents Lauro Jocsen, Manolo Hilario, Alberto Lim, Felipe Gella.

EUGENIANO Perez III resigned as corporate secretary of Aboltiz Equity Ventures Inc. to pursue graduate studies and research in intellectual property law in Stockholm University, Sweden effective Jan. 10. Assistant corporate secretary Elsa Divinagracia will take his place in the meantime.

THE TRANSFER of Vicente Paterno's 18.84 million Philippine Seven Corp. common shares, at P3 per share, took place last Dec. 18 via cross-sale through the Philippine Stock Exchange. The shares were transferred equally among his six children.

ANSCOR Consolidated Corp., a subsidiary of A. Soriano Corp., bought 690 Anscor shares on Dec. 22. To date, the total number of Anscor shares owned by Anscor Consolidated is 693.6 million.

PHILIPPINE Tobacco Flue-Curing and Redrying Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Feb. 6, 2004, 2 p.m., at its principal office at A. Bonifacio Street, Balintawak, Quezon City.

FERNANDO Ginete retired as vice president and resident manager of CADP Group Corp. effective at the close of business hours on Dec. 30.

SPI Technologies bought 400,000 SPI shares at an average price of P13 per share on Dec. 22 as part of its buy-back program.

IONICS Inc. completed on Dec. 19 the sale of its 50-percent shareholding in Andes Ionics Inc. to its joint venture partner Andes Electric Co. Ltd. of Japan for P69.149 million in cash. **Compiled by Armin Adina, PDI Research**

CURRENCIES

December 23, 2003

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.806517	1.000000	55.464000
Japan	Yen	0.007502	0.009302	0.515900
United Kingdom	Pound	1.422534	1.763800	97.827400
Hongkong	Dollar	0.103892	0.128816	7.144700
Switzerland	Franc	0.641263	0.795102	44.099500
Canada	Dollar	0.606221	0.751654	41.689700
Singapore	Dollar	0.472006	0.585240	32.459800
Australia	Dollar	0.591808	0.733783	40.698500
Bahrain	Dinar	2.139302	2.652520	147.119400
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.215054	0.266645	14.789200
Brunei	Dollar	0.470629	0.583533	32.365100
Rupiah	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000118	0.006500
Indonesia	Baht	0.020377	0.025265	1.401300
Thailand	Baht	0.219610	0.272294	15.102500
UAE	Dhram	0.100000	1.239900	68.769800
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.337838	18.737800
Argentina	Peso	0.272472	0.341997	18.968500
Brazil	Real	0.275826	0.166625	9.241700
Denmark	Kroner	0.134386	0.022012	1.220900
India	Ruppee	0.017753	0.263193	14.597700
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.021270	0.088519	4.909600
Mexico	New Peso	0.071392	0.641190	35.563000
New Zealand	Dollar	0.517130	0.148505	8.236700
Norway	Kroner	0.119772	0.017498	0.970500
Pakistan	Ruppee	0.014112	0.144957	8.039900
South Africa	Rand	0.016910	0.000676	0.046500
Korea	Won	0.000676	0.136454	7.568300
Sweden	Kroner	0.110052	0.022569	1.253400
Syria	Pound	0.018226	0.029455	1.637000
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023756	0.000627	0.034800
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000506		

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 23, 2003)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17.25	17	17.25	25,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46.5	46	46.5	334,600
China Banking Corp.	675	675	675	675	380
Citibank Savings Bank	16	16	16	16	5,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	34	34	34	34	98,400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	1,430,000
Metrobank Bank & Trust	27	27	26.5	26.5	113,100
Philippine National Bank	24.25	24.25	24	24.25	42,500
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	5,000
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.5	5,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	25	27	25	27	600
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.34	2.34	2.3	2.3	50,000
First Abacus Financial	0.44	0.5	0.44	0.5	320,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	170	170	170	170	250
Manulife Financial Corp.	1740	1750	1735	1750	1,590
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.34	431,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	210	210	210	210	11,200
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1305	1320	1305	1320	880
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	38,700
Diversified Fin. Network	0.9	0.9	0.89	0.9	5,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.659	0.7	0.69	0.7	3,650,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	845	845	845	845	26,000
Isiople Inc.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.98	540,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.04	0.04	0.039	0.04	2,500,000
Philpino Tel. Corp.	0.9	0.91	0.89	0.9	5,180,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	950	950	930	935	39,970
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	51,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	14.75	14.75	14.75	14.75	66,000
Manila Electric Co. B	24	24.25	24	24.25	228,300
Petron Corp.	2.24	2.36	2.24	2.32	10,255,000
Salon Power Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	50,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	300,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	209,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	125,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	310,000
Union Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	11,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	4,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	32	32	32	32	9,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	17.5	18.25	17.5	18.25	634,700
San Miguel Corp. A	53.5	54	53.5	54	43,400
San Miguel Corp. B	63	63.5	63	63.5	83,800
Universal Robina Corp.	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	10,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	300,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	5,000
Ayala Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.3	5,210,000
Aboltiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	9,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.025	0.023	0.025	4,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.84	0.86	0.84	0.86	3,510,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	3,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	30,000
ATA Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	10,000
Benros Holdings Corp.	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	180,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.175	0.18	290,000
SouthEast Asian Cement	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	100,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.98	1.98	1.98	1.98	7,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	164,600
Ionics Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	2,000
Magnaworld Corp.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	3,601,000
Manila Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	100,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	10,290,000
Musica Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	250,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	90,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.37	50,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.88	1	0.88	1	40,000
Maisushita Elec Phil. Corp.	6.9	7.2	6.9	7	15,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	2,000,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	26	26	26	26	1,000
Pyrex Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,500,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13	13	13	13	323,800
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.55	1,530,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	20,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	2,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	25	25	25	25	563,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series M	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	500
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,500
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	7	7	7	7	11,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.1	6	6	6,888,000
Arandia Properties Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	500,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.22	1,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,000,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	0.0775	100,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.04	1.04	9,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.5	2,554,000
MINING					
Lapanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	1,370,000
Lapanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	1,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	8,000,000
Philux Mining Corp. A	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	1,150,000
Philux Mining Corp. B	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	200,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	30,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	0.0032	10,000,000
	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	400,000

BSP vows to keep key rates steady in 1st half

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday vowed to keep its overnight rates steady at 6.75 percent for borrowing and 9 percent for lending in the first half of 2004 to spur domestic activity and help offset the impact of a lethargic foreign investments flow.

"We can maintain an accommodative monetary stance next year. We may do a minimal adjustment in the second half of the year if the US Federal Reserve would push through with a plan to jack up its rates by 100 basis points," said BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

The BSP chief, however, said the Monetary Board would not match the US Fed's increase. Local monetary authorities would likely limit any rate hike between a quarter-to-half-a-point.

The central bank chief said the current policy rates were sufficient to support the government's growth objectives while keeping consumer prices stable.

Buenaventura said monetary authorities saw no need to raise the BSP rates to tame the volatile peso, or to further bring the rates down to propel a sagging economy.

Local monetary authorities are scheduled to review the monetary

policy on Jan. 15.

The peso is seen to average at 56 next year on account of a weak dollar inflow from foreign direct and portfolio investments although remittance from overseas Filipino workers should help offset the sluggish investments flow, according to Buenaventura.

In 2004, the BSP said foreign direct investments, particularly in IT services and manufacturing, could reach about \$1 billion. Investments on call centers were perceived to be unaffected by short-term political volatility unlike other sectors.

Local investors, according to the BSP, are also more concerned than the foreigners on the political situation. This requires stimulus to perk up the local economy, including modest interest rates and low inflation.

The benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate used by banks in pricing loans is seen to average at between 7.5 and 8.5 percent next year from about 6 percent this year while inflation should be at between 4 and 5 percent in 2004 from about 3.1 percent this year.

The central bank governor said the policy-making Monetary Board would have to assess how inflation in the country would be affected by a one-point hike in US rates. The US

rate is currently at 1 percent.

A rate hike in the US will raise the cost of its products. Since it is the world's biggest economy, an increase in its inflation rate will consequently lead to higher inflation rates for other economies.

An increase in US rates can also lead to higher US treasury yields that were being used as benchmarks for bond issues. Thus, it can also raise the cost of the government's foreign borrowings in the latter part of the year.

Buenaventura said any increase in the central bank's policy rates would be minimal.

"An increase in US rates to 2 percent from 1 percent is big but to us, if we just increase by 25 to 50 basis points, then it would bring our overnight borrowing rate to 7 to 7.25 percent which is not so bad," he said. The only time the BSP had adjusted its key rates this year was in July when it cut by a quarter-of-a-percentage point.

But when the peso started acting up in August, it removed the tiering scheme that paid a decreasing rate for bank deposits in the BSP, effectively paying a flat 6.75 percent for overnight placements. This was to mop up excess liquidity that may have been used by certain quarters to speculate against the peso.

Kriss Kringle 2003

COCKTAILS



Victor C. Agustin

TWAS the night before Christmas. FPJ and Erap have fallen asleep after their usual extended beer-wrestling marathon. Having been *compadres* for so long, the two friends both dreamt they were in a Premiere Productions Christmas party in the midst of a gift-giving frenzy.

These were what the two saw giving what to whom:

- Kris Aquino—Key to chastity belt, from Joey Marquez
- Joey Marquez—Ampicillin tablets, from Kris Aquino
- Iggy Arroyo—Truth serum, from Panfilo Lacson and Serge Osmefia
- Wimpy Fuentesbella and Gilbert Teodoro—Accounting 101 remedial course in Tagalog, from COA Commissioner Guillermo Carague
- Jose Isidro Camacho—Mouth strap, from Cora Guidote
- Winston Garcia—Super glue, from Jose Isidro Camacho
- Favorite Publisher—Alarm clock, from the White House protocol office; a real tuxedo, from Maurice Arcahe; elevator shoes, from Roberto Romulo
- Babe Romualdez—Dog leash, from Favorite Publisher
- OV Espiritu—Boxing gloves, from Vicente Panlilio
- Vicente Panlilio—Punching bag, from OV Espiritu
- Antonio Cojuangco III—December edition of Philippine Tatler, from Denise Yabut Cojuangco
- Manuel Montecillo—Waste basket, from Adolf Azcuna
- Upsilonians—Kalabasa, from Nelia Gonzales
- Ambassador Philippe Lhuillier—Car import privileges, from Rome embassy staff
- Greg Garcia - Blank stock certificates, from Publicis
- William Gatchalian—Wack Wack visitor's pass, from Greg Yu
- Greg Yu—Golf club, from William Gatchalian
- Grace Tiongo—Doll stuck with pins, from Rosario Bernaldo
- Rosario Bernaldo—Doll stuck with pins, from Grace Tiongo
- Jose Luis Vera and Jose Pardo—Canvas

awnings and ear plugs, from Prime Highlands

- AGILE consultants—One-way ticket, from Lucio Tan
- Manila Yacht Club—Insecticide, from ex-Commodore Joe Zaldarriaga
- Belgian Ambassador Christiane Tanghe—A box of *tira tira*, from Atom Henares
- Luke Roxas—Oversized red envelope, from Fortunato Cruz
- Fortunato Cruz—Milking cow, from Luke Roxas
- Chungos, Nublas, and Luys—Lifeboat, from Ricardo Tan and Rafael Buenaventura
- Picpa—The usual script, from SGV
- George Siy—A new aquarium, from Bernadette Siy
- Bernadette Siy—Application form for Young Presidents' Organization, from George Siy

Forced at Forbes

- THE MAKATI Regional Trial Court has intervened in the Moreno and Montinola feud over visitation rights to their grandchild, directing the Montinolans to allow the Moreno father to visit the two-year-old daughter he had sired with a Montinola girl.

In addition, the order allows the Moreno boy to bring his child twice a month to visit the Moreno home in Forbes Park.

- EQUITABLE-PCIBANK has put on the block the North Forbes home of the late stockbroker Anselmo Trinidad. The bank is asking P70 million for the 2,108-square-meter property on 9 Talisay Road, whose neighbors include the Sys and the Concepcions.

Heard through the grapevine

THE BANGKO Sentral has agreed to extend another P400 million in liquidity assistance to a perennially troubled thrift bank.

(Cocktails will take a holiday break and will be back on Jan. 5. He may be reached at cocktails_pdi@yahoo.com or at cocktails_pdi@hotmail.com.)

PNOC-EDC, US firm ink deal

PNOC Energy Development Corp. has signed a joint venture agreement with American firm Frontier Finance Group LLC for the implementation of an \$82-million (about P4.9 billion) geothermal project in Sorsogon.

Sergio Apostol, PNOC-EDC chair and president, said in an interview that the company was now awaiting the go-ahead from Malacañang to push through with the 40-MW project.

"The President promised to have it started by the middle January during a previous visit to the Bicol region," he said.

In June, the official said PNOC-EDC had teamed up with the California-based financial advisor and fund arranger, which also cooperated with the company in doing the feasibility study on the optimization of the Bacun-Manito geothermal field in Sorsogon.

Back then, Apostol said the American partner was considering to provide financing of as much as \$120 million for the Sorsogon project.

He explained that the BacMan steam prospect in Sorsogon had a potential to support a 60-megawatt power plant. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

Sugar crisis looms in Negros

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Local officials have warned of a looming sugar crisis as prices of the product dropped to P707 per 50-kilo bag (lkg) last week.

"This is a cause for alarm since Negros Occidental, while making efforts at diversification, is mainly dependent on the sugar industry," said Negros Occidental Gov. Joseph Maranon.

"If the downtrend continues, it will be dangerous for the province," he said.

Sugar Regulatory Administrator James Ledesma admitted that the sugar industry was entering into a crisis situation with the further drop in sugar prices but he assured that measures had been taken to arrest this.

Prices of sugar dipped to P707 per lkg last week from P840 per lkg at the start of the milling season sugar in

late October.

Sugar leaders warned that prices of less than P700 per lkg would be below production levels.

Ledesma said the drop in sugar prices in the first three weeks of December was a normal market behavior although the problem was on the price levels.

He noted that the drop was much slower because the prices of sugar at the start of the milling season were at about P840 per lkg.

In previous years, the prices at the start of milling season were at P950 per lkg, so when prices dropped in December, it only went down to P800 per lkg, he said.

To arrest the drop, Ledesma said the SRA organized the exportation of 4 percent of the country's sugar production, or about 80,000 metric tons, to the world market. The exportation

will start early next year.

He also said 6 percent of the country's sugar production or 120,000 metric tons would be exported to the United States next year.

"We hope the decline in prices can be arrested by January," Ledesma said. "We are taking definite action, we just have to wait it out."

He said the weakening of prices might be attributed to the perceived high supply of sugar and smuggling.

Ledesma, however, said the claim of smuggling is still an allegation as there have been no documented cases yet. It is always much easier to blame smuggling as the culprit, he said.

The demand for sugar has also slackened off by 8.5 percent compared to last year's level, he said.

"It seems the general mood is, why invest when we are not certain about the future?"

Ionics sells 50% stake in PC card making unit

By Doris C. Dumlaog

ELECTRONICS manufacturer Ionics Inc. has sold its 50-percent stake in PC card maker Andes Ionics Inc. (AII) to its Japanese partner Andes Electric Co. Ltd.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, Ionics corporate secretary Manuel Roxas said the company closed the sale on Dec. 19 for P69.15 million in cash.

Andes Electric Co. of Japan, which now owns 100 percent of AII, is expected to rename AII and continue its operations in its present location, Roxas said.

Ionics Properties Inc. will continue to rent out its property to AII for three years, Roxas added.

The Ionics group operates in Cabuyao, Laguna.

Andes of Japan, which co-founded Andes Ionics in the Philippines in January 1997, manufactures color filters for LCD, self-developed products such as photocatalyst air purifier/negative ion-related products, assembles electronic parts, precision molds and automated labor-saving equipment.

For its part, Ionics has been streamlining its organization in view of the downturn in the global high-tech sector.

Andes Ionics posted a sales turnover of P221 million in the first nine months of the year, 28 percent lower than a year ago due to the reduced volume resulting from soft orders. However, it was able to slash cost of sales by P7.5 million to P262.5 million over the same period.

Based on Ionics' latest financial report, AII reported a net loss of P53.2 million in the first nine months of the year compared to the net income of P11.7 million a year ago.

Other remaining subsidiaries of Ionics are: Ionics EMS Inc. which is listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange, Ionics Properties and Ionics Circuits Ltd.

The operation of Synerronix Inc. was discontinued in August this year.

Ionics, which started operations in 1987, has diversified from the production of semi-conductors to the assembly of printed circuit boards as well as the assembly and packaging of finished products or box built. In 1999, it spun off its electronics manufacturing services to Ionics EMS.

The Ionics group had total assets of P5.1 billion and consolidated sales of P4.7 billion during the first nine months of the year.



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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 06
Series of 2003

SUBJECT: RULES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING LEASEHOLD IMPLEMENTATION ON TENANTED AGRICULTURAL LANDS

PREFATORY STATEMENT

The history of the law on leasehold tenancy is a progression from one of election and limited operation to one of compulsion and comprehensive application. Under Section 14 of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 1199, which became operative on 30 August 1954, tenants have the right to choose a leasehold tenancy arrangement.

R.A. No. 3844, which took effect on 8 August 1963, declared agricultural share tenancy as contrary to public policy and was thereby abolished.

Section 4 of R.A. No. 6389 automatically converted agricultural share tenancy throughout the country to agricultural leasehold. R.A. No. 6389, however, did not repeal Section 35 of R.A. No. 3844 which exempted certain landholdings (fishponds, saltbeds, and lands principally planted to citrus, coconuts, cacao, coffee, durian, and other similar permanent trees).

The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (CARL) or R.A. No. 6657, which took effect on 15 June 1988, expressly repealed Section 35 of R.A. No. 3844. The significant implications of this evolution of the law are as follows:

- (1) The abolition of share tenancy now covers all agricultural landholdings without exceptions;
- (2) Leasehold tenancy is no longer just an option which exists by operation of law; and
- (3) Agricultural leasehold can be a preliminary step to land ownership. Hence, all share-crop tenants were automatically converted into agricultural lessees as of 15 June 1988, whether or not a leasehold agreement had been executed.

In accordance with these developments of the law, Section 12 of R.A. No. 6657 mandates the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to determine and fix the lease rentals within retained areas and areas not yet acquired for agrarian reform in accordance with Section 34 of R.A. No. 3844.

Pursuant to the DAR's mandate to protect the rights and improve the tenurial and economic status of farmers in tenanted lands, and its efforts to provide for an effective mechanism that shall implement leasehold and improve the method for determining and fixing lease rentals, as well as deal with external factors such as the prevailing practice and stance of landowners to deny the existence of tenancy relations whenever possible, the rules and procedures governing agricultural tenancy and leasehold implementation are hereby codified, modified and amended as follows.

ARTICLE I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. *Coverage.* These rules and procedures shall apply to all tenanted agricultural lands, including but not limited to:

- 1.1 Retained areas under Presidential Decree (P.D.) No. 27 and R.A. No. 6657.
- 1.2 Tenanted agricultural lands not yet acquired for distribution under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).
- 1.3 All other tenanted lands which may be validly covered under existing laws, including but not limited to:
 - 1.3.1 Tenanted landholdings that may be within the purview of Department of Justice (DOJ) Opinion No. 44-1990 but tenancy was established prior to reclassification and actual use remains agricultural after reclassification. Such landholdings are coverable under the leasehold system unless and until the DAR issues an exemption order and the tenant's receive/s the disturbance compensation as provided in the said exemption order.
 - 1.3.2 All other tenanted landholdings that may otherwise qualify for exemption or exclusion from CARP coverage, for as long as actual use remains agricultural. Such landholdings are coverable under the leasehold system unless and until the DAR issues an exemption or exclusion order and the tenant's receive/s the disturbance compensation as provided in the said exemption or exclusion order.

SECTION 2. *Definition of Terms.* In the implementation of comprehensive leasehold operations, the following are the commonly used terms:

- 2.1. **Agricultural Land** – As one of the six essential elements of agricultural tenancy, it means "land devoted to any growth, including but not limited to crop lands, salt beds, fish ponds, idle land and abandoned land" (R.A. No. 3844, Section 166(1)). It refers to "lands devoted to or suitable for the cultivation of the soil, planting of crops, growing of trees, raising of livestock, poultry, fish or aquaculture production, including the harvesting of such farm products, and other farm activities and practices performed in conjunction with such farming operations by persons whether natural or juridical.
- 2.2. **Agricultural Leasehold Contract** – A formal tenurial arrangement reduced into writing between a lessor-landholder and lessee-farmer where the former consents to the latter's personal cultivation in consideration for a fixed rental either in money or produce or both.
- 2.3. **Agricultural Leasehold Relation** – It is limited to the person who furnishes the landholding, either as owner, civil law lessee, usufructuary, or legal possessor, and the person who personally cultivates the same (R.A. No. 3844, Section 6).
- 2.4. **Agricultural Lessee** – A person who, by himself and with the aid available from within his immediate farm household, cultivates the land belonging to, or possessed by another, with the latter's consent for purposes of production, for a price certain in money or in produce or both. It is distinguished from civil lessee as understood in the Civil Code of the Philippines. (R.A. No. 3844, Section 166(2)).
- 2.5. **Agricultural Lessor** – A person, natural or juridical, who, either as owner, civil law lessee, usufructuary, or legal possessor, lets or grants to another the cultivation and use of his land for a certain price (R.A. No. 3844, Section 166(3)).
- 2.6. **Agricultural Year** – The period of time required for raising a particular agricultural product, including the preparation of the land, sowing, planting and harvesting of crops and, whenever applicable, threshing of said crops: *Provided, however,* That in case of crops yielding more than one harvest from planting, "agricultural year" shall be the period from the preparation of the land to the first harvest and thereafter, from harvest to harvest. In both cases, the period may be shorter or longer than a calendar year (R.A. No. 3844, Section 166(4)).
- 2.7. **Auxiliary crop** – Any product raised other than the crop to which the cultivation of the land is principally devoted in each agricultural year, and excluding the produce of the homelot (R.A. No. 2263, Section 2 (5)(r)).
- 2.8. **Crop Diversification** – The practice of growing two or more different kinds of crops in one area for a given period to maximize the whole area.
- 2.9. **Deductible Items** – Allowable list of costs subtracted from the computed gross normal harvests and which costs are utilized for seeds and the cost of harvesting, threshing, loading, hauling, and processing, whichever is applicable.
- 2.10. **Homelot** – A lot suitable for dwelling with an area of not more than three percent (3%) of the area of the landholding provided that it does not exceed one thousand (1,000) square meters and that it shall be located at a convenient and suitable place within the land of the landholder, to be designated by the latter, where the tenant shall construct

his dwelling. However, incomes from vegetables, poultry, pigs, other animals, minor industry products raised or produced within the homelot, shall accrue to the tenant exclusively.

- 2.11. **Immediate Farm Household** – The members of the family of the lessee and other persons who are dependent upon him for support and who usually help him in his farming activities.
- 2.12. **Indiscriminate Cutting** – The felling of trees that tends to materially affect the productivity of the farm.
- 2.13. **Inter-cropping** – The practice of simultaneously growing two or more crops in between the principal crop.
- 2.14. **Landholder** – A person, natural or juridical, who, either as owner, civil law lessee, usufructuary, or legal possessor, lets or grants to another the use or cultivation of his land for a consideration either in shares under the share tenancy system, or a price certain or ascertainable under the leasehold tenancy system.
- 2.15. **Normal Harvest** – The usual or regular produce obtained from the land when it is not affected by any fortuitous event like drought, earthquake, volcanic eruption, and the like.
- 2.16. **Proven Farm Practices** – Sound farming practices generally accepted through usage or officially recommended by the Department of Agriculture (R.A. No. 3844, Section 166(11)).
- 2.17. **Share Tenancy** – The relationship which exists whenever two persons agree on a joint undertaking for agricultural production wherein one party furnishes the land and the other his labor, with either or both contributing any one or several of the items of production, the tenant cultivating the land personally with the aid of labor available from members of his immediate farm household, and the produce thereof to be divided between the landholder and the tenant (R.A. No. 3844, Section 166(25)).
- 2.18. **Tenant** – A person who himself and with the aid available from within his immediate farm household, cultivates the land belonging to, or possessed by another, with the latter's consent for purposes of production, sharing the produce with the landholder under the share tenancy system, or paying to the landholder a price certain or ascertainable in produce or in money or both, under the leasehold tenancy system (R.A. No. 1199, Section 5(a)).

SECTION 3. *Policies and Governing Principles.* In the implementation of the agricultural leasehold operations in the country, the following are the governing policies and principles:

- 3.1. All share tenancy arrangements are contrary to public policy and are deemed automatically converted to agricultural leasehold as of 15 June 1988 by operation of law.
- 3.2. Agricultural leasehold shall be based on a tenancy relationship. The following are the essential elements of agricultural tenancy:
 - 3.2.1. Parties are the landholder and the tenant;
 - 3.2.2. Subject is the agricultural land;
 - 3.2.3. There is consent freely given, either orally or in writing, express or implied;
 - 3.2.4. The purpose is agricultural production;
 - 3.2.5. There is personal cultivation; and
 - 3.2.6. Compensation, either in terms of shares in the harvest or payment of a fixed amount in money and/or produce.
- 3.3. The agricultural leasehold relation under this A.O. shall not be extinguished by mere expiration of the term or period in a leasehold contract nor by the sale, alienation or transfer of the legal possession of the landholding. In case the agricultural lessor sells, alienates or transfers the legal possession of the landholding, the purchaser or transferee thereof shall be subrogated to the rights and substituted to the obligations of the agricultural lessor pursuant to Section 10 of R.A. No. 3844.
- 3.4. Cultivation is not limited to the plowing and harrowing of the land, but also the husbanding of the ground to forward the products of the earth by general industry, taking care of the land and fruits growing thereon, fencing of certain areas, and the clearing thereof by gathering dried leaves and cutting grasses. In coconut lands, cultivation includes clearing the landholding, gathering of coconuts, their pilings, husking and handling as well as the processing thereof into copra, although at times with the aid of hired laborers.
- 3.5. The consideration for the lease of riceland and lands devoted to other crops shall not be more than the equivalent of twenty-five percent (25%) of the average normal harvest during the three (3) agricultural years immediately preceding the date the leasehold was established after deducting the amount used for seeds and the cost of harvesting, threshing, loading, hauling and processing, whichever are applicable (R.A. No. 3844, Section 34, 1st clause).

If the land has been cultivated for a period of less than three (3) years, the initial consideration shall be based on the average normal harvest during the preceding years when the land was actually cultivated, or on the harvest of the first year in the case of newly-cultivated lands, if that harvest is normal (R.A. No. 3844, Section 34, 1st proviso).

After the lapse of the first three (3) normal harvests, the final consideration shall be based on the average normal harvest during these three (3) preceding agricultural years (R.A. No. 3844, Section 34, 2nd proviso).

In the absence of any agreement between the parties as to the rental, the maximum allowed herein shall apply (R.A. No. 3844, Section 34, 3rd proviso).
- 3.6. The lease rental shall cover the whole farmholding attended to by the lessee. Computation of lease rental shall include both principal and auxiliary crops in the area existing as of the time the leasehold was established.
- 3.7. Where the rental has been fixed, whether in cash or in kind, such rental shall constitute the consideration for the use of the land and the lessee may diversify and/or plant auxiliary crops. In such a case, the tenant shall receive eighty per centum and the landholder twenty per centum of the net produce provided that all the expenses of production are shouldered by tenant/lessee. (R.A. No. 1199, Section 30).
- 3.8. In the homelot, where the tenant may raise vegetables, poultry, pigs, other animals, or engage in minor industries, the products shall accrue to the tenant exclusively. The tenant's dwelling shall not be removed from the lot already assigned to him by the landholder unless there is severance of tenancy relationship between them as provided under Section 9 of R.A. No. 1199 or unless the tenant is ejected for cause, and only after the expiration of forty-five (45) days following such severance of relationship or dismissal for cause. (R.A. No. 2263, Section 5).
- 3.9. It shall be the right of the agricultural lessor to propose a change in the use of the landholding to other agricultural purposes, or in the kind of crops to be planted (R.A. No. 3844, Section 29(2)). The lessor and/or lessee may propose additional plantings or additional uses and subsequently agree upon the proportionate increase in lease rentals. In case of disagreement as to the proposed change, the same shall be settled by the Adjudicator according to the best interest of the parties concerned. In no case shall an agricultural lessee be ejected as a consequence of the conversion of the land to some other agricultural purpose or because of a change in the crop to be planted (R.A. No. 3844, Section 29(2)).
- 3.10. As a general rule, tenancy is indivisible and dual tenancy/co-tenancy is not allowed. This rule is however subject to the following exceptions:
 - 3.10.1. As among the heirs of a deceased tenant-farmer, the landowner has recognized the children as the tenant's successor to the tenancy of the landholding.
 - 3.10.2. A common law wife who is recognized as a co-tenant by the landowner is entitled to cultivation of the same after the common-law husband had left the landholding.
 - 3.10.3. When co-tenancy exists with the consent of the landowners.

The DAR adheres to the policy of "indivisibility of tenancy", hence only the foregoing exceptions are recognized.

- 3.11. Where there are two or more tenants on the same lot (when divisibility of tenancy is allowed), each producing a different crop, they may decide to have a joint leasehold agreement or execute separate leasehold agreements with the landholder, whichever is feasible. This provision applies only to tenancy relationship existing as of the effectivity of this Order and shall not be countenanced prospectively.
 - 3.12. An agricultural lessee shall continue the enjoyment and possession of his landholding except when his dispossession has been authorized by the proper tribunal in a judgment that is final and executory for causes provided by law (R.A. No. 3844, Section 36, opening paragraph). However, the non-payment of the rental due to crop failure to the extent of seventy-five percent (75%) as a result of a fortuitous event, shall not be ground for dispossession, although the obligation to pay the rental due that particular crop is not thereby extinguished; (R.A. No. 3844, Section 36(6)). To avoid compounded rents, it shall be the duty of the Municipal Agrarian Reform Officer (MARO) to encourage farmers to avail of the crop insurance program of the government.
 - 3.13. In case a prospective agricultural lessee is under serious threat of eviction as a consequence of the leasehold coverage implementation (not as a consequence of execution of a lawful order), the matter shall be immediately reported, with the assistance of the MARO, to the nearest police or law enforcement agency for documentation. Such report may later be necessary in guiding the DAR in resolving questions pertaining to existence or non-existence of tenancy relationship.
 - 3.14. If capital improvements are introduced on the farm by the landholder to increase its productivity, the rental shall be increased proportionately to the consequent increase in production due to said improvements. The cost of the capital improvement, including interest thereon, will be determined, and the number of years shall be fixed within which the increase in rental shall be paid. In case of disagreement, the Adjudicator shall determine the reasonable increase in rental. (R.A. No. 3844, Section 34, 4th proviso).
 - 3.15. The lease rental determined by the MARO in accordance with law and existing policies of the DAR shall be binding and valid only upon affirmation by the Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer (PARO).
 - 3.16. Leasehold agreements under this Order shall be in writing, using the prescribed leasehold contract, duly notarized, registered with the Municipal Treasurer's Office, and annotated at the back of the Original Copy of Certificate of Title on file with the Register of Deeds (ROD). Refusal of the landholder to sign a leasehold contract shall not affect the tenant's status as lessee.
 - 3.17. Existing leasehold agreements shall be respected provided that the agreed lease rentals do not exceed the maximum provided by law and the other stipulations therein are not contrary to law. For the purpose of determining compliance with the terms and conditions written therein, these agreements shall be subject to the MARO's periodic review.
 - 3.18. At all times, the lessor shall respect the rights of the lessee to have peaceful possession and enjoyment of the land and to deal with millers and processors and attend to the issuance of quodans and warehouse receipts for the produce due him (R.A. No. 3844, Section 23(1, 4)). Any act by the landholder or any person representing him in violation hereof shall be prima facie evidence of dispossession.
 - 3.19. If the landowners refuse to accept the lease rental on account of disagreement, the lessee shall deposit the contested lease rental with the nearest Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) Office, or any duly authorized banking institution in the locality, in a trust account in the name of the landholder if the payment is in cash, or in a designated bonded warehouse if the payment is in kind. The lessee shall notify the MARO and the landholder on the payment made.
 - 3.20. In case of disagreement over the issue on the fixing of lease rentals, the PARO shall either adopt the MARO's recommendation or render his own decision. The PARO's decision shall be final and immediately executory after the lapse of fifteen (15) days from receipt of the copy thereof.
 - 3.21. Any party who disagrees with the PARO's decision must submit within the same 15-day period a complaint before the Provincial Agrarian Reform Adjudicator (PARAD). Notwithstanding the filing of the case before the PARAD, the PARO's decision shall be provisionally observed.
 - 3.22. The Adjudicator shall decide the case within thirty (30) days from the last day of the filing date of the last responsive pleading, pursuant to the first sentence of Section 51 of R.A. No. 6657. Failure to decide the case within the said 30-day period shall automatically result to the provisional maintenance of the PARO's decision.
 - 3.23. In case of disagreement over the issue of existence of tenancy relationship and the PARO's finding is in favor of its existence, and later a party files a case before the Adjudicator in accordance with Section 18 hereof, the distribution of the proceeds from intervening harvest shall be as follows:
 - 3.22.1. Release 50% to the party claiming to be tenant;
 - 3.22.2. Release 25% to the landholder;
 - 3.22.3. Deposit the cash equivalent of the remaining 25% in a bank account in the name of the Department of Agrarian Reform in trust for the parties concerned.
 - 3.24. In all activities requiring the participation of the Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee (BARC) Chairman or his duly authorized representative, or Barangay Chairman or his duly authorized representative, it shall be understood that the Barangay Council can only participate where there is no BARC organized.
- SECTION 4. *Specific Policies for Lands Primarily Devoted to Sugarcane.* In the implementation of the leasehold system, particularly in sugarcane lands, the following policies shall apply:
- 4.1. In order to progressively improve the condition of the lessee, and as part of the leasehold arrangement, the lessee shall have the following rights to be exercised by him personally or through a duly registered cooperative/farmers' association of which he is a bonafide member:
 - 4.1.1. To enter into a contract with the sugar central millers for the milling of the sugarcane grown on the leased property. Any milling contract existing between the landholder and the sugar millers shall be deemed to have been amended, with the lessee/s assuming all the rights of the landholder in such contract, until the lessee/s and the miller shall have entered into a new milling agreement under reasonable terms and conditions.
 - 4.1.2. To be issued a warehouse receipt (quedan) or molasses storage certificate by the sugar central for the manufactured sugar, molasses and other by-products.
 - 4.1.3. To have free access to the sugar central's factory, facilities, and laboratory for purposes of checking and/or verifying records and procedures in the processing of sugarcane through professional representation.
 - 4.1.4. To be furnished a weekly statement of cane and sugar account showing, among other things, the tonnage of the delivered cane and analysis of the crusher juice.
 - 4.1.5. To be given thirty (30) days notice in writing before the sugar and other by-products are sold through public auction. These rights shall bind the DAR Sheriff or person designated by the Adjudicator to have custody of the unliquidated harvest to observe the process of public auction and shall not be allowed a negotiated sale of the sugar and other by-products.
 - 4.1.6. To be provided with the standard tonnage allocation by the miller/sugar central.
 - 4.2. The lease rental for sugarcane lands shall be not more than twenty five percent (25%) of the average normal harvest less the value of the cost for seeds/cane points, harvesting (cutting), loading, hauling and/or trucking fee, and cost of processing, pursuant to Section 34 of R.A. No. 3844. (see Annex "A" on sample computation)
 - 4.3. The determination of the average normal harvest to be used in computation

ing the lease rental in sugarcane lands shall be based on the following: 4.3.1 If the leasehold relationship existed before 15 June 1988, the effectivity of R.A. No. 6657, the average normal harvests of the three (3) agricultural years immediately before the date the leasehold relationship was established shall be used. 4.3.2 If the leasehold relationship was established on 16 June 1988 by operation of R.A. No. 6657, the average normal harvest of the three (3) agricultural years immediately preceding the said date shall be used. 4.3.3 If the land has been cultivated for less than three (3) years prior to the date the leasehold was established, the estimated normal harvest during the three (3) agricultural years immediately preceding the said date shall be considered as the normal harvest. 4.4 An agricultural year for sugarcane shall be understood to mean the period from land preparation to harvesting. Ratooning (from trash burning to harvesting) shall likewise be considered as one agricultural year. 4.5 The leasehold agreement shall include both the sugarcane products (sugar) and by-products (molasses). 4.6 The lease rental of the land shall be paid in an amount certain, in money or in produce, or both, as may be agreed upon by the parties. Such rental shall be paid after the exact produce shall have been determined using the Certificate of Quedan and molasses storage certificate issued by the sugar central/miller, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parties under reasonable terms and conditions. 4.7 The agricultural lessees shall not be required to assume, directly or indirectly, any part of the rent, or other considerations which the agricultural lessor is under obligation to pay third persons for the use of the land (R.A. No. 3844, Section 31). 4.8 Any contract by which the agricultural lessee is required to accept a loan or to make payment(s) in kind shall be contrary to law, moral or public policy (R.A. No. 3844, Section 15). 4.9 The agricultural lessor may mortgage expected rentals (R.A. No. 3844, Section 29). 4.10 Notwithstanding the above provisions of the law and any contract of mortgage existing between the landholder-planter and financial institutions to the contrary, it is unlawful for the landholder-planter to mortgage to any entity (such as banks or financial institutions) that part of the produce which is due to the agricultural lessee. 4.11 If the landholder incurred loans from a bank or any financial institution, such bank can only attach the fixed lease rental due to the landholder. It shall be unlawful for the bank or any financial institution to withhold the quedan covering the portion of the crop due to the lessee. 4.12 The DAR shall encourage sugarcane farmer-lessees to establish associations or cooperatives which shall assist them or directly deal with the millers, processors, transport operators, and financial and banking institutions. The DAR shall likewise assist farmer-lessees in securing milling accommodations or membership in sugar planters associations. SECTION 5. Specific Policies for Land Primarily Devoted to Coconut. In the implementation of the leasehold system, particularly in coconut lands, the following policies shall apply: 5.1 The indiscriminate cutting of coconut trees by the landholder/tenant shall be deemed prima facie evidence to dispossess the tenant/landholder of his landholding. To rebut this presumption: 5.1.1 The party who wishes to cut coconut trees shall secure the written consent of the other party; and 5.1.2 The proposing party shall secure a permit to cut coconut trees from the Philippine Coconut Authority, in accordance with R.A. No. 8048 (Coconut Preservation Act of 1995) and its implementing rules and regulations. 5.2 In consonance with the preceding paragraph, it shall be the duty of the MARO assigned in the area to encourage replanting of coconut trees and the maximization of the landholding especially the area in between the coconut trees. He/She shall assist the parties in coordinating with proper government agencies and institutions. 5.3 The application of the allowable deductible items in coconut shall depend on the final product. 5.3.1 If the final product is copra, the deductible items are the: 5.3.1.1 cost of harvesting, which shall include picking and piling; and 5.3.1.2 cost of processing, which shall include husking, splitting, scooping, and drying. 5.3.2 If the final product is green nuts, the deductible items above shall be used except for the cost of processing. 5.3.3 If the final product is husked nuts, the costs in items 5.3.1.1 and the cost of husking in 5.3.1.2 shall be deducted. 5.4 The lease rental for coconut lands shall not be more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the average normal harvest for a specific area for the preceding three (3) calendar years less the value of production cost. (See Annex "B" on sample computation) 5.5 In case there is large-scale replanting in the coconut area initiated by the lessor which may affect the normal coconut production in particular and the leasehold arrangement in general, a new lease rental may be computed proportionate to the decrease in production. 5.6 In the computation of lease rentals, principal crops already existing within the homelot when the same was established shall be considered as included in the leasehold.	immediate farm household by the agricultural lessor to do any work or render any service not in any way connected with farm work or even without compensation if no compensation is paid. 6.7.4 Commission of a crime by the agricultural lessor or his representative against the agricultural lessee or any member of his immediate farm household; or 6.7.5 Voluntary surrender due to circumstances more advantageous to him and his family. SECTION 7. Obligations of Agricultural Lessees. It shall be the obligation of the agricultural lessee to: 7.1 Cultivate and take care of the farm, growing crops, and other improvements on the landholding as a good father of a family and perform all the work therein in accordance with proven farm practices; 7.2 Inform the agricultural lessor within a reasonable time of any trespass committed by third persons upon the farm, without prejudice to his direct action against the trespasser; 7.3 Take reasonable care of the work animals and farm implements delivered to him by the agricultural lessor and see that they are not used for purposes other than those intended or used by another without the knowledge and consent of the agricultural lessor. <i>Provided, however,</i> That if said work animals get lost or die, or said farm implements get lost or are destroyed, through the negligence of the agricultural lessee, he shall be held responsible and made answerable therefor to the extent of the value of the work animals and/or farm implements at the time of the loss, death or destruction; 7.4 Keep his farm and growing crops attended to during the work season. In case of unjustified abandonment or neglect of his farm, any or all of his expected produce may, upon order of the Court, be forfeited in favor of the agricultural lessor to the extent of the damage caused thereby; 7.5 Notify the agricultural lessor at least three days before the date of harvesting or, whenever applicable, of threshing; and 7.6 Pay the lease rental to the agricultural lessor when it falls due. SECTION 8. Prohibitions on Agricultural Lessees. It shall be unlawful for the agricultural lessee to: 8.1 Contract to work additional landholdings belonging to a different agricultural lessor or to acquire and personally cultivate an economic family-size farm, without the knowledge and consent of the agricultural lessor with whom he had entered first into leasehold, if the first landholding is of sufficient size to make him and the members of his immediate farm household fully occupied in its cultivation; or 8.2 Employ a sub-lessee on his landholding: <i>Provided, however,</i> That in case of illness or temporary incapacity, he may employ laborers whose services on his landholding shall be on his account. SECTION 9. Rights of Agricultural Lessors. It shall be the right of the agricultural lessor to: 9.1 Inspect and observe the extent of compliance with the terms and conditions of their contract and the provisions of this Chapter; 9.2 Propose a change in the use of the landholding to other agricultural purposes, or in the kind of crops to be planted: <i>Provided,</i> That in case of disagreement as to the proposed change, the same shall be settled by the Court according to the best interest of the parties concerned: <i>Provided, further,</i> That in no case shall an agricultural lessee be ejected as a consequence of the conversion of the land to some other agricultural purpose or because of a change in the crop to be planted; 9.3 Require the agricultural lessee, taking into consideration his financial capacity and the credit facilities available to him, to adopt in his farm proven farm practices necessary to the conservation of the land, improvement of its fertility and increase of its productivity: <i>Provided,</i> That in case of disagreement as to what proven farm practice the lessee shall adopt, the same shall be settled by the Adjudicator or PARO according to the best interest of the parties concerned; and 9.4 Mortgage expected rentals. SECTION 10. Obligations of Agricultural Lessors. It shall be the obligation of the agricultural lessor to: 10.1 Keep the agricultural lessee in peaceful possession and cultivation of his landholding; and 10.2 Keep intact such permanent useful improvements existing on the landholding at the start of the leasehold relation as irrigation and drainage system and marketing allotments; which in the case of sugar quotas shall refer both to domestic and export quotas, provisions of existing laws to the contrary notwithstanding. SECTION 11. Prohibitions on Agricultural Lessors. It shall be unlawful for the agricultural lessor to: 11.1 Dispossess the agricultural lessee of his landholding except upon authorization by the DARAB. Should the agricultural lessee be dispossessed of his landholding without authorization from the DARAB, the agricultural lessor shall be liable for damages suffered by the agricultural lessee in addition to the fine or imprisonment prescribed in R.A. No. 3844 for unauthorized dispossession; 11.2 Require the agricultural lessee to assume, directly or indirectly, the payment of the taxes or other levies levied by the government on the landholding; 11.3 Require the agricultural lessor to assume, directly or indirectly, any part of the rent, or other considerations which the agricultural lessee is under obligation to pay to third persons for the use of the land; 11.4 Deal with millers or processors without written authorization of the lessee in cases where the crop has to be sold in processed form before payment of the rental; or 11.5 Discharge, directly or indirectly, the formation, maintenance or growth of unions or organizations of agricultural lessees in his landholding, or to initiate, dominate, assist or interfere in the formation or administration of any such union or organization.	the Process Flow). The DARMO shall: 13.1 Send an invitation letter (LTI-LHO Form No. 6) by personal service or by registered mail with return card to the landholder/s and tenant/s, furnishing a copy thereof to the BARC, to discuss the coverage, and implementation of leasehold on the subject landholding. The letter shall indicate the date or schedule of the conference between the parties and require the parties to submit the necessary documents such as production data, cost of production, type or kind of crops planted (principal and auxiliary) and other relevant information (i.e., receipt of payments, affidavit or any proof from disinterested persons/parties attesting to the existence of leasehold relationship between the landholder and his/her tenant/s). 13.2 Review and evaluate documents or pieces of evidence submitted by the parties, including, if any, report of threat of eviction of prospective lessee as provided for under Section 3, Item 3.13 of this A.O. 13.3 Prepare a masterlist of the following landholdings, including the corresponding landholders and tenants (LTI-LHO Form No. 3): 13.3.1 landholdings previously covered and those for updating; 13.3.2 retained areas which are subject of leasehold; and 13.3.3 landholdings covered by the CARP. SECTION 14. Meeting and Mediation Conference (See Annex "E" for the Process Flow). The DARMO shall: 14.1 With the assistance of the BARC, or in the absence thereof, the Barangay Council, conduct a meeting on the scheduled date with the lessor and lessee, and undertake the following: 14.1.1 Explain in the local dialect to the lessor and lessee the salient features of the leasehold system, particularly on the following: a. security of tenure; b. rights and obligations; c. grounds for dispossession; d. prohibitions and limitations; e. terms and conditions; and f. other related information. 14.1.2 Interview the landholder and tenant/lessee to verify the documents submitted and information gathered. 14.2 Prepare the lease rental worksheet (LTI-LHO Form No. 8). SECTION 15. In Case of Agreement of Landholder and Tenant (See Annex "F" for the Process Flow). The following shall be undertaken: 15.1 The DARMO shall assist the parties in executing the agricultural leasehold contract (LTI-LHO Form No. 9). 15.2 Documentation. The DARMO shall: 15.2.1 Prepare the Leasehold Documentation Folder (LHDF) which shall contain the following: a. Investigation report detailing the validation activities made by the MARO; b. Profile of landholding (LTI-LHO Form No. 2); c. List of Landholdings Subject of Agricultural Leasehold System (LTI-LHO Form No. 3); d. Notice of Posting (LTI-LHO Form No. 4); e. Certificate of Posting Compliance (LTI-LHO Form No. 5); f. Copy of Invitation Letter and Schedule of Meeting/Conference (LTI-LHO Form No. 6); g. Minutes of the Meetings and Mediation Conferences conducted by the MARO (LTI-LHO Form No. 7); h. Worksheet forms used in the computation of lease rentals (LTI-LHO Form No. 8); i. Agricultural Leasehold Contract (LHC) signed by lessor and lessee (LTI-LHO Form No. 9); and j. Documents or evidence presented by the agricultural lessor and agricultural lessee and other information gathered by the MARO including production data, industry data, list of deductible items, prevailing practices in the area, and other relevant information. 15.2.2 Transmit the LHDF through a memorandum (LTI-LHO Form No. 10) to Department of Agrarian Reform Provincial Office (DARPO). 15.3 Affirmation of Agricultural Leasehold Contract. The DARPO shall: 15.3.1 Upon receipt of the LHDF, review and evaluate the information and contents of the LHDF to check the authenticity, consistency, sufficiency and completion of documents. If in order, the PARO shall affirm the agreements stipulated in the LHC. Otherwise, return the same to DARMO for appropriate action. 15.3.2 Transmit the affirmed LHC to DARMO for registration and annotation at the Register of Deeds (ROD). 15.4 Registration and Annotation. The DARMO shall: 15.4.1 Receive and record in the designated logbook the affirmed LHC. 15.4.2 Require the parties to cause the notarization of the affirmed LHC by the DAR commissioned notary public or in his absence, any notary public within the area. 15.4.3 Facilitate the registration of LHC with the Municipal Treasurer's Office (LTI-LHO Form No. 12) and annotate the same at the back of the title as file with the ROD (LTI-LHO Form No. 13). 15.4.4 Furnish the lessor, lessee and DARPO a copy of the registered LHC after annotation by the ROD for execution/implementation of the same. 15.5 The DARPO shall maintain files of LHDF with registered and annotated LHC for record purposes.
ARTICLE II RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS SECTION 6. Rights of Agricultural Lessees. It shall be the right of the agricultural lessee to: 6.1 Have possession and peaceful enjoyment of the land; 6.2 Manage and work on the land in a manner and method of cultivation and harvest which conform to proven farm practices; 6.3 Mechanize all or any phase of his farm work; 6.4 Deal with millers and processors and attend to the issuance of quedans and warehouse receipts for the produce due him; 6.5 Continue the exclusive possession and enjoyment of any homelot he may have occupied upon the effectivity of R.A. No. 3844, which shall be considered as included in the leasehold; 6.6 Be indemnified for the cost and expenses incurred in the cultivation, planting or harvesting and other expenses incidental to the improvement of his crop in case he surrenders or abandons his landholding for just cause or is ejected therefrom. In addition, he has the right to be indemnified for one-half of the necessary and useful improvements made by him on the landholding: <i>Provided,</i> That these improvements are tangible and have not yet lost their utility at the time of surrender and/or abandonment of the landholding, at which time their value shall be determined for the purpose of the indemnity for improvements; 6.7 Terminate the leasehold during the agricultural year for any of the following causes: 6.7.1 Cruel, inhuman or offensive, treatment of the agricultural lessee or any member of his immediate farm household by the agricultural lessor or his representative with the knowledge and consent of the lessor; 6.7.2 Non-compliance on the part of the agricultural lessor with any of the obligations imposed upon him by the provisions of R.A. No. 3844 or by his contact with the agricultural lessee; 6.7.3 Compulsion of the agricultural lessee or any member of his	ARTICLE III OPERATING PROCEDURES The following procedures shall govern the implementation of leasehold operation: SECTION 12. Identification Phase (See Annex "C" for the Process Flow). The Department of Agrarian Reform Municipal Office (DARMO) shall: 12.1 Based on the record of landholdings and under the tenancy and leasehold system, the DARMO shall, on the effectivity of R.A. No. 6657, conduct field investigation and gather information about landholdings and tenants with the assistance of the Barangay Agrarian Reform Committee (BARC) (LTI-LHO Form No. 1). 12.2 Prepare the individual profile of the landholdings (LTI-LHO Form No. 2) and the preliminary list of identified landholdings subject of agricultural leasehold system with its corresponding landholders and tenants. (LTI-LHO Form No. 3) 12.3 Post the preliminary list of identified landholdings with corresponding prospective lessors and lessees for a period of fifteen (15) days in at least three (3) conspicuous places (LTI-LHO Form No. 4 which shall have a translation in the local dialect typed in italics under each line): 12.3.1 In the respective barangay halls of the barangays where the landholding/s is/are located; 12.3.2 In the municipal halls of the municipality where the landholding/s is/are located; and 12.3.3 In other conspicuous places in the community. 12.4 After the elapse of the required 15-day posting period, secure a Certificate of Posting Compliance from the BARC or Barangay Council. (LTI-LHO Form No. 5) SECTION 13. Validation and Updating Phase (See Annex "D" for	SECTION 16. In case of Disagreement of Landholder and Tenant on the Issue of Fixing Lease Rental (See Annex "G" for the Process Flow). The following shall be undertaken: 16.1 The DARMO shall: 16.1.1 Within five (5) working days after the meeting, invite the parties to attend a mediation conference which shall be held not later than thirty (30) working days after the meeting. Any party who fails to attend the mediation conference despite due notice, waives his right to participate in the fixing of lease rentals. 16.1.2 With the assistance of the BARC Chairman or his duly authorized representative, or in the absence thereof, the Barangay Council, conduct and facilitate the mediation conference on the scheduled date, discussing comprehensively the possible options of each party relative to the issue of determining and fixing of lease rentals. 16.1.3 If the parties reach an agreement, execute and register

the LHC in accordance with Section 15 of this A.O. In case the parties still cannot reach an agreement despite exhaustive mediation efforts, prepare, in coordination with the BARC, the Provisional Lease Rental (PLR) (LTI-LHO Form No. 11) within ten (10) working days from mediation date.

- 16.1.4 Prepare the LHDF and transmit the same (LTI-LHO Form No. 10) to the DARPO, together with the PLR and concomitant recommendation, including Certification from BARC or Barangay Council declaring failure of mediation conference (LTI-LHO Form No. 14).

16.2 The DARPO shall:

- 16.2.1 Upon receipt of the LHDF, review the PLR and recommendation of the MARO. Within twenty (20) working days, the PARO shall render a decision by either adopting the MARO's recommendation or promulgate his own decision thereon.
- 16.2.2 Send a copy of the decision to all parties concerned, through the DARMO.
- The decision of the PARO shall be final and immediately executory after the lapse of fifteen (15) working days from receipt of a copy thereof, unless rejected by the party adversely affected, or his/her counsel or representative on record.
- 16.2.3 File the LHDF including the PARO's decision for reference.

SECTION 17. In case of Disagreement of Landholder and Tenant on the Issue of Existence of Tenancy Relationship (See Annex "H" for the Process Flow).

17.1 The DARMO shall:

- 17.1.1 If the landholder denies the existence of tenancy relationship, gather, within ten (10) working days from the date of meeting indicated in Section 13, Item 13.1 of this A.O., additional information, documents, data, and other pieces of evidence necessary to support said existence or non-existence of tenancy relationship, taking into consideration the six (6) essential elements of agricultural tenancy as provided under Section 3, Item 3.2 of this A.O.
- 17.1.2 Prepare the LHDF and the concomitant recommendation thereon, and transmit the same (LTI-LHO Form No. 10) to the DARPO, together with the Certification from BARC or Barangay Council declaring failure of mediation conference (LTI-LHO Form No. 14).

17.2 The DARPO shall:

- 17.2.1 Receive the LHDF and the MARO's recommendation. Within twenty (20) working days from receipt thereof, the PARO shall render a decision by either adopting the said recommendation or promulgate his own decision thereon.
- If the PARO's decision denies the existence of tenancy relationship, the only legal remedy available to the party alleging existence of tenancy relationship is an original action before the Adjudicator.
- If the PARO's findings are in favor of the existence of tenancy relationship, the decision shall be in the form of an Implementation Order. The Implementation Order must contain, among others, the lease rentals on the subject landholding.
- 17.2.2 Send a copy of the Implementation Order to all parties concerned, through the DARMO.
- The decision and Implementation Order of the PARO shall be final and immediately executory after the elapse of fifteen (15) working days from receipt of a copy thereof, unless rejected by the party adversely affected, or his/her counsel or representative on record. The Implementation Order shall remain executory unless and until the PARAD rules otherwise.
- 17.2.3 File the LHDF including the PARO's decision and Implementation Order for reference.

SECTION 18. In Case Aggrieved Party/ies Opt/s to File a Notice of Rejection of the PARO's Decision or Implementation Order (See Annex "I" for the Process Flow). The PARAD shall:

- 18.1 Within five (5) working days from receipt of the aggrieved parties' Notice of Rejection of the PARO's decision/implementation order and the complaint pursuant to Section 3, Item 3.21 of this A.O., require the respondent to file a responsive pleading thereto within a non-extendible period of ten (10) days. Upon receipt of the responsive pleading or upon the expiration of the ten (10) day non-extendible period to file responsive pleading, the case is deemed submitted for decision.
- 18.2 Render a decision on the case within thirty (30) days after the filing of the last responsive pleading or after the elapse of the period to file the last responsive pleading thereof.
- 18.3 Provide the parties concerned a copy of the PARAD's decision, copy furnished the DARPO.
- If the PARAD's decision is rejected/contested by the party/ies adversely affected, the existing Department of Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board (DARAB) Rules of Procedure shall apply.

SECTION 19. Implementation of the Decision of the PARAD (See Annex "J" for the Process Flow). Subsequent to the PARAD's decision, on either or both issues of fixing of lease rental and/or the existence of tenancy relations, the following shall be undertaken:

- 19.1 The DARPO shall:
- 19.1.1 Receive, file and record in the logbook, the copy of the decision of the PARAD; and
- 19.1.2 Instruct the DARMO to facilitate the implementation of the PARAD's decision in order to come up with the Leasehold Contract, attaching a photocopy of the same.
- 19.2 The DARMO shall assist the lessor and lessee in executing the LHC upon receipt of the instruction from the PARO and the copy of the PARAD's decision pursuant to Section 15 of this A.O.

**ARTICLE IV
SUPERVISION OF HARVEST**

SECTION 20. Prior to Issuance of Implementation Order. In case an intervening harvest occurs within the period starting from commencement of leasehold proceedings (filing date of the petition for leasehold coverage) until the date the PARO issues an Implementation Order for the PLR, the parties shall treat the intervening harvest as standing crops, and the following arrangement shall govern the supervision of harvest:

- a. 75% goes to the lessee claiming to be tenant; and
- b. 25% goes to the landholder.

The above proportions shall however, be released after deducting the cost or amount of the deductible items as defined in Section 2, Item 2.9 of this A.O.

SECTION 21. After Issuance of Implementation Order. In case, however, an Implementation Order has been issued by the PARO and the party rejects/contests the same before the Adjudicator or requests for a supervision of the intervening harvest/s, the following policies may apply:

- 21.1 The provisional lease rental as indicated in the Implementation Order shall govern the supervision of intervening harvests occurring within the period starting from date of issuance of the Implementation Order until the Adjudicator rules otherwise.
- 21.2 If the intervening harvest occurs after a case is filed before the PARAD on the Implementation Order, the Adjudicator may, upon motion or *motu proprio*, issue an interlocutory order for proper supervision of harvest.

- 21.3 If the intervening harvest occurs after the lapse of the 30-day period for the PARAD to decide on the responsive pleading filed by any party, the provisional lease rental as indicated in the PARO's Implementation Order shall govern the supervision of harvest.

**ARTICLE V
PROCEDURES FOR THE MONITORING AND REPORTING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL LEASEHOLD SYSTEM**

SECTION 22. Monitoring. To ensure the proper implementation of agricultural leasehold, the following shall be undertaken:

22.1 Monitoring of Leasehold System Implementation (See Annex "K" for the Process Flow). For purposes of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of agricultural leasehold, the following procedures shall be observed by the concerned parties:

The DARMO shall:

- 22.1.1 Conduct annual inspections of landholdings under leasehold per barangay in coordination with the BARC to determine:
- 22.1.1.1 Whether or not the original lessee/s or their qualified successors are still the actual cultivators of the lands covered by the LHC or PLR Implementation Order;
- 22.1.1.2 Whether or not the terms and agreements stipulated in the LHC or the terms stipulated in the PLR Implementation Order are complied with;
- 22.1.1.3 Whether or not the leasehold relation (LHR) is extinguished or terminated in case there is no qualified successor; and
- 22.1.1.4 Whether or not, there was an increase in production and yield of the subject landholding under leasehold as a result of any improvement introduced by the landholder-lessor which necessitates a review and corresponding adjustment in the lease rentals.
- 22.1.2 Prepare the Field Investigation Report (LTI-LHO Form No. 1) and file the same for reference.
- 22.1.3 In case the original lessee/s or their qualified successors are no longer the actual cultivators of the lands covered by LHC or PLR Implementation Order, initiate and coordinate with the landholder and existing tenants for the execution of a new LHC, and forward the same to the DARPO for appropriate action following the procedures provided under Section 15 of this A.O.
- 22.1.4 In case the terms and agreements stipulated in the LHC, or the terms stipulated in the PLR Implementation Order are not complied with, the following shall be undertaken:

22.1.4.1 Send invitation letter to both parties for a consultation/meeting to resolve/settle the issue.

22.1.4.2 Conduct and facilitate the meeting in coordination with and assistance of the BARC Chairman or in the absence thereof, the Barangay Council representative.

22.1.4.3 Require the parties to sign a commitment to abide by the terms and agreements stipulated in the LHC or PLR Implementation Order (LTI-LHO Form No. 15), and file the same for reference. Otherwise, forward to the DARPO the unresolved issue/problem for appropriate action.

22.1.5 In case the LHC is extinguished due to the absence or lack of a qualified successor, identify potential lessee and follow the procedures outlined in Section 15 of this A.O. for the execution, registration and annotation of LHC.

22.1.6 In case there is an increase in the production and yield of the subject landholding under leasehold, the following shall be undertaken:

22.1.6.1 Require both parties to submit data and/or documents such as production data, production costs for the principal and auxiliary crops, and other relevant information.

22.1.6.2 Prepare the Lease Rental Worksheet (LTI-LHO Form No. 8) using the data and information submitted by the parties concerned pursuant to Section 14, Item 14.2 of this A.O. The necessary adjustments in the lease rentals shall be made pursuant to the provision of Section 34 of R.A. No. 3844, as amended by R.A. No. 6389.

22.1.6.3 Notify the parties concerned for the execution of the amendment of the LHC and transmit the same to the DARPO, following the procedures as provided in Section 15 of this A.O.

22.1.7 Prepare a report on the actions taken regarding the cases found during the field inspection and forward the same, together with the pertinent documents to DARPO.

The DARPO shall:

- 22.1.8 Upon receipt of the report on unresolved issues and pertinent documents from the DARMO on any or all of the abovecited areas monitored, record the same in the designated logbook.
- 22.1.9 Review and classify the issue/s and concern/s into:
- 22.1.9.1 those requiring adjudication; and
- 22.1.9.2 those requiring PARO's appropriate action.
- 22.1.10 If the issues and concerns require adjudication, forward the issues to the Adjudicator and notify the lessor and lessee. However, if the issues and concerns require the PARO's appropriate action, the PARO shall initiate and exhaust all efforts to resolve said issues and concerns following the pertinent procedures outlined in this A.O.
- If despite exhaustive efforts, the issues and concerns are not resolved, prepare the certification declaring non-resolution of issues (LTI-LHO Form No. 16) and provide the concerned parties a copy of the same.
- 22.1.11 Prepare a consolidated report of the issues and concerns on leasehold implementation submitted by DARMOs for reference.

22.2 Monitoring of Cases Filed at the PARAD (See Annex "L" for the Process Flow). The following procedures shall apply in the monitoring of cases filed at the PARAD:

22.2.1 The DARPO shall request the PARAD for an update on the status of leasehold cases filed therein.

22.2.2 The PARAD shall prepare the Status Report of LH cases filed and forward same to DARPO.

22.2.3 The DARPO shall receive and consolidate the Status Report of LH cases filed at the PARAD and furnish copy of the report to DARMO, DAR Regional Office (DARRO) and DAR Central Office (DARCO)-BLAD.

22.3 Compliance Audit by the Internal Audit Service (See Annex "M" for the Process Flow). The following shall be undertaken:

- 22.3.1 The Provincial and Regional Internal Audit Service (IAS) shall:
- 21.3.1.1 Conduct annual audit on the compliance of this A.O.; and
- 21.3.1.2 Prepare and submit Audit Report to IAS Central Office.
- 22.3.2 The DARCO-IAS shall:
- 22.3.2.1 Upon receipt of the Audit Report submitted by the Provincial/Regional IAS, review the same and consolidate in one report for information and appropriate action, if necessary.
- 22.3.2.2 Submit the consolidated report together with its audit recommendation to the Office of the Secretary (OSEC).
- 22.3.3 The OSEC shall file, review and/or undertake appropriate action, if necessary, on the submitted Audit Report.

SECTION 23. Reporting (See Annex "N" for the Process Flow). For reporting purposes, the following shall be observed:

23.1 The DARMO shall:

- 23.1.1 Update the masterlist of all landholdings under LHC, stating the corresponding names of the lessor/s and lessee/s of different landholdings (LTI-LHO Form No. 3).
- 23.1.2 Forward the updated masterlist to DARPO and maintain a file.

23.2 The DARPO shall:

- 23.2.1 Based on the record, prepare Accomplishment Report on Leasehold Operation (LTI-LHO Form No. 17) and consolidate the updated masterlist of landholdings under LHC submitted by DARMO.
- 23.2.2 Submit the Accomplishment Report and consolidated report to DARCO-BLAD, copy furnished the DARRO.

23.3 The DARRO shall receive the above reports from DARPO for reference.

23.4 The DARCO-BLAD shall:

- 23.4.1 Consolidate/evaluate/analyze the Accomplishment Reports submitted by DARPOs.
- 23.4.2 Prepare the National Accomplishment Report on Leasehold Operation (LTI-LHO Form No. 17).
- 23.4.3 Submit and forward the National Accomplishment Report on Leasehold Operation to the following offices/units:
- 23.4.3.1 Planning Service; and
- 23.4.3.2 Management Information Service.

**ARTICLE VI
APPEALS**

SECTION 24. Exhaustion of Remedies. The appealing party shall first exhaust all available legal remedies before elevating the case to a higher authority, observing the following order:

- 24.1 MARO
- 24.2 PARO
- 24.3 PARAD
- 24.4 DARAB
- 24.5 Court of Appeals
- 24.6 Supreme Court

**ARTICLE VII
EFFECTIVITY OF LEASEHOLD**

SECTION 25. Effectivity of Leasehold Operation. Leasehold arrangements covered by this Order take effect immediately and shall cover the harvest at the time of the issuance of this A.O., subject to reimbursement of expenses incurred in the production if not shouldered/advanced by the lessee.

**ARTICLE VIII
EXTINGUISHMENT**

SECTION 26. Grounds for Extinguishing Leasehold Agreements.

- 26.1 Abandonment by the lessee without the lessor's knowledge.
- 26.2 Voluntary surrender of the landholding after giving notice to the lessor three (3) months in advance.
- 26.3 Lessee has no successor, pursuant to Section 9 of R.A. No. 3844, as amended, in the event he dies or becomes permanently incapacitated.
- 26.4 Leasehold relation shall likewise be extinguished when the lessee's disposition has been authorized by the court in a judgment that is final and executory on grounds provided by law (R.A. No. 3844, Section 36, opening paragraph).

**ARTICLE IX
SANCTIONS**

SECTION 27. Penalties on Landholders/Lessors and Tenants/Lesseees. Any person who willfully prevents or obstructs the implementation of the CARP shall be penalized pursuant to Section 74 of R.A. No. 6657.

SECTION 28. Administrative Sanctions. Administrative sanctions shall be imposed on DAR field personnel, without prejudice to the filing of criminal and civil actions, who have willfully, feloniously, and/or erroneously processed leasehold folders, and circumvented the provisions of this A.O. resulting to the transfer of agricultural lands to individuals who are not actual tenants under CARP.

**ARTICLE X
FINAL PROVISIONS**

SECTION 29. Transitory Provisions. Upon the effectivity of this Order, the field offices shall undertake a massive information dissemination campaign of the leasehold system. All existing leasehold contracts shall be updated and modified accordingly, and all pending leasehold documentation folders shall be processed pursuant to the manner and procedure laid down in this Order.

SECTION 30. Repealing Clause. This Order modifies and/or repeals A.O. No. 4, Series of 1997, M.C. No. 11, Series of 1994, A.O. No. 5, Series of 1993, A.O. No. 9, Series of 1991 and A.O. No. 4, Series of 1989, and other issuances inconsistent herewith. The unrepealed provisions of R.A. No. 1199 (as amended by R.A. No. 2263), R.A. No. 3844 (as amended by R.A. No. 6389), R.A. No. 6657, and other pertinent laws shall guide this Order in the implementation of leasehold system nationwide.

SECTION 31. Effectivity of this Order. This Order shall take effect ten (10) days after its publication in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation, pursuant to Section 49 of R.A. No. 6657.

Dillman, Quezon City, December 18, 2003.


ROBERTON PAGDANGANAN
Secretary

People, Events & Products

Metrobank open on holidays

METROBANK clients who are waiting for their remittances from abroad or who have important banking transactions over the holidays need not worry as the country's largest bank has appointed more than 100 branches to be open at certain days this Christmas season. This is in addition to more than 600 Metrobank ET and 2,000 BancNet ATMs nationwide where they can withdraw anytime during the holidays. Following is Metrobank's holiday banking schedule and the assigned branches.

Dec. 24 (Wednesday). Metro Manila (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Farmers Plaza. Luzon (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.): Apalit, Nagsugbu, Batangas, Rosario, Batangas.

Dec. 26 (Friday) Metro Manila (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Edsa-Cubao Aurora, Elcano, Head Office, Honorio Lopez Boulevard-Balut, Northbay Boulevard, Quiapo, Redemptorist-Baclaran, Sta. Monica, Novaliches, Sto. Cristo, Sto. Cristo-San Nicolas, Susano Road-Novaliches. (12 noon to 6 p.m.) Ortigas-San Miguel Avenue. Luzon (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Legaspi-Rizal, Tabaco, Albay. Visayas (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Ormoc. Mindanao (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Cagayan de Oro-Main.

Dec. 27 (Saturday), Metro Manila (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) Ortigas-Robinson's Galleria.

Luzon (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Agoo La Union, Baguio-Carino, Baguio-

Magsaysay, Baguio-Session, Balanga, Bataan, Balayan, Batangas, Bangued, Abra, Batac, Ilocos Norte, Benguet La Trinidad, Calamba-Real, Calapan, Candon, Cauayan, Dagupan-Fernandez, Dagupan-Perez, Iriga, Camarines Sur, La Union ML Quezon, Laoag-Gen. Segundo, Laoag-Rizal, Lipa Ayala, Luceña-Red V, Marilao-Bulacan, New Divisoria Market, Occidental Mindoro, Olongapo, Santiago-Main, Solano, Tuguegarao-Luna, Vigan. Visayas (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Antique, Cebu-Lincoln, Iloilo-Delgado, Roxas. Mindanao (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Dipolog Gen. Luna, Pagadian-Rizal, Pagadian-Sta. Lucia, Zamboanga-Gov. Lim, Zamboanga-Jaldon, Zamboanga-Veterans, Zamboanga-Brillantes, Zamboanga-Galleria.

Dec. 28 (Sunday) Luzon (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Tanauan.

Dec. 31 (Wednesday) Luzon (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Dagupan Main, San Carlos-Pangasinan, San Pablo-Maharlika.

Jan. 2, 2004 (Friday) Metro Manila (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Edsa Cubao-Aurora, head office, Quiapo, Tutuban Center-mall II. (12 noon to 6 p.m.) Ortigas-San Miguel Avenue. Luzon (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Batangas Main, Batangas-Kumintang Ilaya, Dinalupihan Bataan, Guagua, Hagonoy Bulacan, Iba Zambales, Naga-Gen. Luna, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan, San Miguel Bulacan, Tanauan. Visayas (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Bacolod-Araneta, Bacolod-Capi-

tol, Bacolod-Gatuslao, Bacolod-Gonzaga, Bacolod-Lacson, Bacolod-Libertad, Bacolod-North Drive, Bacolod-Singang, Cebu-Tabunok, Silay, Ormoc, Leyte.

Mindanao (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Cagayan de Oro-Main, Davao-Agdao, Davao-Bajada, Davao-Bankerohan, Davao-Buhangin, Davao-Center, Davao-Doctors, Davao-Ecoland, Davao-Matina, Davao-Monte Verde, Davao-Panabo, Davao-R. Castillo, Davao-Rizal, Davao-Roxas, Davao-San Pedro, Davao-Sta. Ana, Davao-Tagum, Davao-Toril, Digos, General Santos-Makar, General Santos-P. Acharon, General Santos-Pioneer, General Santos-Santiago Boulevard.

Jan. 3, 2004 (Saturday) Metro Manila (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Divisoria Center, MacArthur Highway-Malinta. Luzon (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Aparri, Baguio-Magsaysay, Cauayan, Lemery, Batangas, Lipa B. Morada, Vigan, Tabaco. Visayas (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Bacolod-Sixth Street, Cebu-Downtown Center, Cebu-Lincoln, Cebu-Taboan. Mindanao (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Basilan, Dipolog-Gen. Luna, Ozamis-Burgos, Ozamis-Rizal, Pagadian-Rizal, Pagadian-Sta. Lucia, Zamboanga-Brillantes, Zamboanga-Galleria, Zamboanga-Gov. Lim, Zamboanga-Jaldon, Zamboanga-Veterans.

Jan. 4, 2004 (Sunday) Visayas (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Roxas-Burgos.



MAGGI SAVOR NIGHTS' AT DENCIO'S ROCKWELL

The first-ever 'Maggi Savor Nights' was recently held at Dencio's Rockwell. Diners were seen having a good time as the event featured exciting party games, sexy Chili Girls, and Latin house music with live percussion. 'Maggi Savor Nights' perked up the place in the same way Maggi Savor Chili Garlic en-

hances the flavor of 'pulutan' and other dishes. Shown are (from left) Sandy Cu, Maggi new products manager, DJ Zabala-Sheng, Maggi Savor assistant brand manager, James Seguer, Maggi marketing promotion and events manager, and En-rico Lim, Dencio's Rockwell operations manager.



RENU MULTIPLUS OUTSTANDING CONTACT LENS SOLUTION BRAND

Bausch & Lomb's ReNu MultiPlus is this year's outstanding contact lens solution brand. This citation was given by the Family and Consumers Choice Award (FCCA) in cooperation with the Ideal Family and Parents Foundation and National Consumer Affairs Foundation (NCAF) on its 11th annual tribute to the outstanding family consumer products and Filipino families held recently at Meralco Theater, Ortigas, Pasig City. ReNu MultiPlus is a no-rub and an all-in-one soft contact lens care solution that gives a totally refreshing feeling to the eye. ReNu

MultiPlus Tri-Action formula has three special ingredients to thoroughly clean, disinfect and moisturize contact lenses. Celebrating its 150th year, Bausch & Lomb is the leading vision care company. Shown receiving the award are Sherry R. Perez, marketing services manager (3rd from right) and Erwin T. Tantoco, commercial director (4th from right) of Bausch & Lomb Philippines Inc., and Merlito C. Apuya, marketing director (5th from right) of One Pharma Co Inc., exclusive distributor of Bausch & Lomb Vision Care.



FREEMASONS DONATE TO CHARITY FOUNDATION, MISSIONARIES

Left photo shows Labong Lodge #59 of Masonic District #3 recently turning over medical equipment to the Chinatown Charity Foundation. Shown are the Freemasons of Labong Lodge and the vice president of the Manila Chinatown Charity Foundation. Right photo, meanwhile, shows the Freemasons, under



the jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Philippines, donating clothes to the missionaries of the poor in Catmon, Malabon as its Christmas outreach to the community. Shown are Freemasons VW Benito Tan, Bro. Winston Chingkit, David Resus, and Nelson Yau with the missionary staff.

Walter Mart opens Bulacan branch

A NEW landmark has risen north of Metro Manila. Walter Mart-the choice neighborhood destination for best buys and value shopping-has just opened its 14th branch in Bulacan.

Spread out over more than 14,000 square meters of land along the Cagayan Valley Road corner Plaridel Diversion Road in Plaridel, Bulacan, the

newest Walter Mart branch houses top-of-the-line stores such as Abenson (the country's largest appliance store network) and sister company Home Plus-the furniture department. Also opening simultaneously were its anchor establishments such as Chowking, Jollibee, KFC, Greenwich, Robinsons Department Store and Handyman.

Abenson, one of Walter Mart's anchor stores, has a wide selection of small and large home appliances and audio-video products that include top brands like Sony, Panasonic, Samsung, LG, Philips, La Germania, and Westinghouse. At Home Plus on the second floor, you can find an equally varied (and reasonably priced) selection of home furnishings from beds to cabinets, living and dining room sets.

Also being completed are two modern, fully air conditioned movie theaters due to open in time for the Metro Manila Film Festival on Dec. 25.

The new branch, which also has a parking lot that can accommodate more than 200 vehicles, is the first Walter Mart branch in a suburban community north of Metro Manila.

The company's expansion efforts had previously been concentrated in the Calabarzon area, with branches in Sta. Rosa and Calamba in Laguna and Carmona, Dasmariñas, Imus and Rosario in Cavite following its community-based shopping center concept. Walter Mart pioneered the

idea in the country when it opened its first store in Quezon City in 1991. This community-based concept brings the department store to the people instead of the other way around, making it more convenient for residents of nearby communities.

By branching out to Plaridel, Bulacan, Walter Mart is starting its northward expansion. Soon, we may be seeing Walter Mart branches in locations like Pampanga, Tarlac, and even Baguio.

The formal opening for the Bulacan branch was held Dec. 5 and began with an opening address by Elmer de Leon, followed by congratulatory messages from Plaridel Mayor Rolando Javier, Josephine Gomez and Bulacan Governor Josefina dela Cruz, who also led the ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Adding luster were teen star Anne Curtis (who hosted games during the show) and players from the Philippine Basketball Association's San Miguel team, who visited the mall and then joined the motorcade that wound itself around the surrounding community. Joining the motorcade were the mall's tenants.

The Walter Mart Center in Plaridel, Bulacan, is accessible via the North Luzon Expressway. Take the Santa Rita Exit, and turn right at the Cagayan Valley Road. Walter Mart is right beside the La Mirada Royale Subdivision and the Grand Industrial Estate.

ICU Tokyo exchange student



MARIA Leonora L. Arinuelo II has recently been chosen as an exchange student at the International Christian University (ICU), Tokyo, Japan, and is a grantee of the Association of International Education, Japan (AIEJ) Scholarship. She is one of the twin daughters of Eduardo and Leonora Arinuelo. She is the youngest among her sisters, eldest Lileth and twin Maria Theresa. "Yeye" is a senior BS Computer Science student from the College of Engineering at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. In Tokyo, she will be a one-year regular student in ICU under the Division of Natural Sciences in the College of Liberal Arts and will be taking up Information Science. Her commencement exercises in ICU will be held by the end of June 2004.

New executive media director



ACE SAATCHI & Saatchi president Reynaldo G. Icasas recently announced the appointment of Juan Eduardo "Jon" Gatbonton as executive media director. Before joining the agency, Gatbonton was connected with Optimedia, a media independent under the Publicis umbrella as vice president/media director. He also had a 5-year stint with GMA 7 as its sales director, handling sales for non-prime, primetime and Channel V, and later moved to its marketing services department as marketing services director handling the Network's national promotions. Gatbonton began his career in media with Ace Saatchi & Saatchi 11 years ago, moving on to become associate media director before joining GMA 7. He is a management graduate of the University of the Philippines.

A star to rise

A RISING star worth watching is James Basco, a 24-year-old former "That's Entertainment" member and ramp model. An actor and a performing artist, James had performed in Thailand and Japan for two years. He also had performed in provincial concerts with Champagne Morales and Karylle Tatlonghari last January and April of this year. Now, James is back to share with us his music. He is coming up with a new album titled "Entouch...James Basco." It will be released soon.

Valdes clan reunion set

The Valdes clan, originally from Pampanga, will be holding its annual grand reunion on Sunday, Jan. 11, 2004, at the Valle Verde 6 Clubhouse, 22 Beetle Street, Valle Verde 6, Pasig City, from 9:30 a.m. onwards. An estimated 500 family members are expected to attend this event that has been held annually since 1995. The clan would like to invite all relatives to attend this event, and foster camaraderie among the members.

Clips



KIDDIE BOY WONDER WINS GOLF TOURNEY

PhilPost chief executive staff Jorge M. Mariano III, representing Postmaster General Diomedio Villanueva, awarded the winner's cup to wonder boy AR Ramos who emerged as champion in the class B division of the PhilPost Reporters Association (PRA) golf tournament held recently at Club Intramuros, Manila. 6-year-old Ramos is a kiddie golf champion in the United States. Also shown are PRA president Ellen Fernando and members Mean Hernandez and Gemma Amargo.

Product Files

Power drill for the 'DIYers'

AN IDEAL DIY (do-it-yourself) Christmas gift for grandpa, dad, or hubby who would rather do than hire, make than buy, is this Metabo power rotary drill. Model B560 has a capacity of 3/8 inches, 560 watts, torque of 5 Nm and speed of 2800 RPM. It comes complete with a set of drill bits and a pair of gloves ready to use for many years, long after this Christmas. with telephone numbers 363-All of this for only P3,000. The 0159 or 361-4841.



Designer Whey Protein now available in more outlets



DESIGNER Whey Protein, America's top-selling protein shake taken by bodybuilders and professional athletes around the world, is now available in more outlets in Metro Manila at a more affordable price. The winner of several best in taste awards in the United States, Designer Whey is an ideal supplement not just for bodybuilders, but for individuals with an active lifestyle as well.

Distributed locally by Edgepro, Designer Whey is now more widely available. It is sold in over 50 outlets including Olympic Village, Toby's, Chris Sports Plaza, Healthfoods and Herb Products, Health Shop, and Clark Hatch gyms, among others.

Among the benefits of taking Designer Whey, says Greggory Ro-

mualdez, Edgepro vice president, is that it builds lean muscle mass and helps meet the body's daily protein requirement. Active individuals need 0.6 to 0.9 grams of protein per pound of bodyweight daily. Designer Whey also contains anti-oxidant building properties to help ward off sickness and Branched Chain Amino Acids (BCAA) for energy. It provides the body with the needed protein for muscle growth without the added fat present in other protein sources such as meat.

Designer Whey comes in three flavors (Chocolate, Vanilla and Strawberry), and is available in 2-pound jars and the special value-for-money 5-pound jar. Suggested retail price is P1,650 for the 2-pounder and P3,100 for the 5-pounder.



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4. Samahang Magsasaka ng Pantabangan Foundation sa
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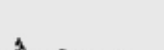
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Ligas, Bacoar, Cavite

Initial DP: P 25,000



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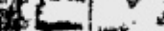
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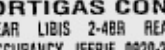
MARIDOL CUMPIO
719-1844/0919-5860305

HOUSE & LOT

COASTAL WOODS VILLAGE

Ligas, Bacoar, Cavite

Initial DP: P 25,000



Northville

Baliuag, Bulacan

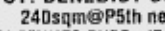
Initial DP: P 20,000



Daytown

Habay, Bacoar, Cavite

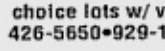
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Foreclosure No. 03-2040

NOTICE OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL SALE

Upon extra-judicial petition for sale under Act 3135 as
amended in relation to Section 20 of RA No. 4726, otherwise
known as the Condominium Act, filed on October 23, 2003
by GOTESCO REGENCY TWIN TOWERS
CONDOMINIUM CORP., Petitioner, with postal address at
Ground Flr., GRTTCC, 1129 Concepcion St., Ermita,
Manila, against GMCC UNITED DEVELOPMENT CORP.,
Respondent, with postal address at Unit 701-C Tower 3,
Gotesco Regency Twin Towers, Concepcion St., Ermita,
Manila in order to satisfy the obligation of the respondent to
the petitioner in the amount of P263,218.39 as of October
22, 2003 inclusive of penalty charges plus litigation
expenses, sheriff's fees and other charges, the undersigned
Clerk of Court & Ex-Officio Sheriff of Manila thru her deputy,
will sell at public auction to the highest bidder for CASH and
in Philippine Currency on December 29, 2003 at 10:00 AM
or soon thereafter at the Office of the Clerk of Court & Ex-
Officio Sheriff of Manila, 4th Floor, City Hall Bldg., Manila,
the real property mentioned hereunder including
improvements existing thereon, to wit:

CONDOMINIUM CERTIFICATE OF TITLE
NO. 11384

"SEVENTH FLOOR-TOWER 3 — UNIT 701
containing an area of 142.73 sq. meters, consisting
of Living Room, Three (3) Bedrooms, Three (3)
Toilets & Baths, Kitchen, Maid's Quarter, Foyer,
Balcony and Laundry Area, (GOTESCO
REGENCY TWIN TOWERS RESIDENTIAL
CONDOMINIUM)."

Prospective buyers or bidders are hereby enjoined to
investigate and verify for themselves the title to said
property and the encumbrances thereon, if any there be.

Manila, Philippines, November 12, 2003.

(Sgd.) JENNIFER H. DELA CRUZ-BUENDIA
Clerk of Court
& Ex-Officio Sheriff

(Sgd.) CARLOS Q. BARREDO
Sheriff in-charge

(PDI-Dec. 10, 17 & 24, 2003)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



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SHERYLL MANGRUBANG INGAN
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no longer connected with

EXPRESS ORDER SYSTEM, INC.,
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TRUTH VERIFIER SYSTEMS, INC.

Any transaction entered into, for and in
behalf of the companies mentioned above
shall not be honored.

(PDI-Dec. 24, 2003)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



This is to inform the public that

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whose photo appears above is

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Any transaction entered into, for and in
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(PDI - December 24, 2003)

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CARS FOR RENT

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NEW MODELS W/ OR W/O DRIVER
MLA HO 536-8822 • 303-789
O.C. BR 426-2278 • 426-4084

BNEW 5639774 / 09177348678

Bnew Vans 8254058 8261045

CARS/ VANS/ BRIDAL/ 8869956

*Vans Coaster Bus 422-9296

Cheap Van Rental 9330311

L300/ADV. 741-1356

MD HIACE URVAN 8276005

REVO w/driver 9272821

CAR LOAN

1.5% Fast Car Loan 3677523/24

1.5% CARLOAN 373-6519

1.5% CARLOAN 788-0367

1.5% CARLOAN 952-2510

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

EDUCATION PLAN 8061574

EDUCATION PLANS 7137284



THIRD ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROJECT
DIVISION PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT UNIT
DIVISION OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR
DIVISION BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (DBAC)
J. Alano St., Pagadian City
Tel.: (062) 2144-368

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

December 23, 2003

To All Qualified Bidders:

1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) towards the cost of financing the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments for civil works component of the project. Bidding is open to all bidders from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits.

2. The Division Bids and Awards Committee (DBAC) invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the following projects and its locations to wit:

3. Bidding documents may be purchased at DepEd Division Office of Zamboanga del Sur with office address at J.S. Alano St., Pagadian City for a nonrefundable fee of PhP2,500.00 for each set. Interested bidders may obtain further information at the same address.

4. Bids shall be valid for a period of ninety (90) days after Bid opening and must be accompanied by a security in the amount of 2.5% of total bid price, and shall be delivered to Division's Bids and Awards Committee, Department of Education – Division Office of Zamboanga del Sur, J.S. Alano St., Pagadian City on or before the above stated time and dates, at which they will be opened in the presence of the bidders who wish to attend.



GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING REMITTANCES AND DISBURSEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSAL CHARGE

WHEREAS, Section 34 of Republic Act No. 9138 otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001" (the "Act" or "EPIRA") provides that a Universal Charge to be determined, fixed and approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission ("ERC") shall be imposed on all End-Users for the following purposes:

1. Stranded Debts and Stranded Contract Costs of National Power Corporation ("NPC") in excess of the amount to be assumed by the Government of the Philippines;
2. Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities;
3. Missionary Electrification;
4. The equalization of the taxes and royalties applied to indigenous or renewable sources of energy vis-à-vis imported energy fuels;
5. An environmental charge equivalent to one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P 0.0025/kWh), which shall accrue to an environmental fund to be used solely for watershed rehabilitation and management and shall be managed by NPC under existing arrangements; and
6. A charge to account for all forms of cross-subsidies for a period not exceeding three (3) years.

WHEREAS, Section 5 of Rule 18 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of EPIRA ("IRR") mandates that the Universal Charge shall be a non-by passable charge which shall be (1) collected from all End-Users on a monthly basis by the Distribution Utilities or Suppliers in case of a Contestable Market; or (2) remitted directly to the National Transmission Corporation ("Transco") or its Concessionaire by any End-Users or Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility.

WHEREAS, Section 7 of Rule 18 of the IRR provides that all Self-Generation Facilities whether new, existing or under construction shall not be covered by the imposition of Universal Charge for a period of four (4) years from its imposition; Provided, That, such Self-Generation Facilities shall register with the ERC and PSALM.

WHEREAS, Section 34 of the Act mandates PSALM to be the administrator of the Universal Charge funds and requires PSALM to establish Special Trust Funds ("STFs") for this purpose.

WHEREAS, there is a need to establish procedures for the remittance and disbursement of the Universal Charge and for the timely provision of accurate information in relation thereto, to ensure that the objectives of the Universal Charge are achieved and to enable PSALM to fulfill its obligations under the Act.

WHEREAS, Section 6 (b) of Rule 18 of the IRR requires PSALM, in consultation with the DOF and with the approval of the ERC, to promulgate procedures and guidelines to govern all remittances to and disbursements from the Special Trust Funds.

NOW, THEREFORE, In consideration of the foregoing, PSALM promulgates these "Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Remittances and Disbursements of the Universal Charge" as follows.

Section 1: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In compliance with the EPIRA and its IRR, these Guidelines are being issued by PSALM for:

- (a) the remittance to the Special Trust Funds of the Universal Charge amounts collected or received by Distribution Utilities, Suppliers, and TRANSCO or its Concessionaire;
- (b) the administration by PSALM of the STFs;
- (c) the provision of information to PSALM so that it may comply with its obligations for the management of Universal Charge funds; and
- (d) the disbursement of the Universal Charge by PSALM to the Beneficiaries in accordance with their entitlements as determined and approved by the ERC.

Section 2: DEFINITION OF TERMS

- 2.01 **Defined Terms:** The following terms and expressions shall have the meanings set forth below:
- "Act" or "EPIRA" refers to Republic Act No. 9138, otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001";

"Beneficiaries" means the entities eligible or authorized by the ERC to avail of the Universal Charge pursuant to EPIRA and its IRR as enumerated in Section 3.02 (STFs and their Beneficiaries);

"BTr" refers to the Bureau of Treasury;

"Collecting Entities" refers to (1) Distribution Utilities or Suppliers in case of Contestable Markets; and (2) TRANSCO or its Concessionaire in respect of End-Users and Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility;

"Concessionaire" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR and, for the avoidance of doubt, references herein to TRANSCO shall apply equally to the Concessionaire once the Concessionaire has been appointed to assume TRANSCO's responsibilities;

"Contestable Market" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"Demand Draft" refers to a check issued by a bank with guaranteed funding. This is negotiable only within provincial branches. This instrument is usually coded for security purposes;

"Distribution Utility" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"DOE" refers to the Department of Energy, the government agency created pursuant to Republic Act No. 7638 whose expanded functions are provided in the Act;

"DOF" refers to the Department of Finance, the government agency created pursuant to Executive Order No. 127;

"End-User" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"Energy Regulatory Commission" or "ERC" refers to the regulatory agency created by Section 38 of the Act;

"ERC Rules" refers to the "ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge";

"Government Financial Institution" or "GFI" refers to financial institutions or corporations wholly owned and controlled by the National Government. For purposes of these Guidelines, the GFI must be acceptable to the DOF;

"Guidelines" refers to these "Guidelines and Procedures Governing the Remittances and Disbursements of the Universal Charge";

"IRR" refers to the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the EPIRA;

"Main Trust Account - Universal Charge" means the bank account established by PSALM either with the BTr or a GFI acceptable by the DOF, purposely and exclusively for receiving the remittance of the Universal Charge collections from the Collecting Entities;

"Manager's/Cashier's Check" refers to a check issued by a bank with guaranteed funding. This instrument must be negotiable within Metro Manila only;

"Market Operator" shall have the same meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"Missionary Electrification" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"National Power Corporation" or "NPC" refers to the government corporation created pursuant to Republic Act No. 6395, as amended;

"National Transmission Corporation" or "TRANSCO" refers to the government corporation created pursuant to Section 8 of the EPIRA. References to TRANSCO in these Guidelines shall also be deemed as references to its Concessionaire;

"Person" refers to a natural or juridical person, as the case may be;

"Petitioners" refers to the Persons entitled to petition the ERC for avallment of the Universal Charge as provided in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment);

"Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation" or "PSALM" refers to the government owned and controlled corporation created pursuant to Section 49 of the EPIRA;

"Qualified Third Parties" or "QTPs" refers to persons who meet the qualifications set by the DOE and who obtain the necessary permits from the DOE and any other agency as may be required to be an indirect beneficiary of a portion of the Universal Charge for Missionary Electrification;

"Self-Generation Entity" or "Self-Generation Facility" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"Small Power Utilities Group" or "SPUG" refers to the functional unit of NPC created to pursue missionary electrification function;

"Special Trust Fund" or "STF" refers to a trust fund established by PSALM for each intended purpose of the Universal Charge and its corresponding Beneficiary or Beneficiaries as enumerated in Section 3.02 (STFs and their Beneficiaries);

"STF Account" means an account opened by PSALM either with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF, purposely and exclusively for remittances to or disbursements of the Universal Charge;

"Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities" has the same meaning as "Stranded Contract Costs of Eligible Contracts of Distribution Utilities" as defined in the IRR;

"Stranded Contract Costs of NPC" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"Stranded Debts of NPC" or "Stranded Debts" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"Supplier" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR;

"Universal Charge" has the meaning as defined in the EPIRA and its IRR.

"WESM Rules" shall refer to the rules governing the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market ("WESM"), promulgated by the DOE in its Department Circular No. 2002-06-003, dated 26 June 2002;

"Wholesale Electricity Spot Market" or "WESM" refers to the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market to be created in accordance with RA 9138.

- 2.02 **Rules of Construction:** Unless the context otherwise requires:

- (a) Words singular and plural in number shall be deemed to include the other;
- (b) Section headings are for convenience of reference only, do not form part of these Guidelines, and shall not be deemed to limit or otherwise affect any of the provisions hereof. References to Sections, unless otherwise indicated, are references to sections of these Guidelines;
- (c) In the event that any of the capitalized terms above are defined through reference to the EPIRA and its IRR, in the event of a conflict, the EPIRA definition shall govern, and in the event that any of the capitalized terms above are defined through reference to the EPIRA and its IRR and such definition appears only in the EPIRA or the IRR, the term is deemed to have been defined by the document wherein the definition of such term appears.

The applicable laws, including the EPIRA, its IRR and other applicable government regulations, are incorporated herein by reference

Section 3: COVERAGE

- 3.01 **Petitioners for Availment:** The following are entitled to petition the ERC for availment of the Universal Charge for each of the intended purposes

- (1) PSALM for Stranded Debt and Stranded Contract Costs of NPC;
- (2) Distribution Utilities with respect to their respective Stranded Contract Costs;
- (3) SPUG, for Missionary Electrification;
- (4) Generation companies with respect to the equalization of taxes and royalties between indigenous or renewable energy resources and imported fuels;
- (5) NPC with respect to the environmental charge of one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P 0.0025/kWh) of sales; and
- (6) NPC/PSALM and Distribution Utilities with respect to the mitigation of the removal of cross subsidies.

3.02 **STFs and their Beneficiaries:** These Guidelines cover the following STFs to be established by PSALM, as provided in Section 4.02 (The STFs), for each intended purpose identified in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment), and their respective beneficiaries:

- (1) Stranded Debts and Stranded Contract Costs of NPC for PSALM;
- (2) Stranded Contract Costs for Distribution Utilities as authorized by the ERC;
- (3) Missionary Electrification for SPUG;
- (4) Equalization of taxes and royalties between indigenous or renewable energy resources and imported fuels for generation companies so authorized by the ERC;
- (5) Environmental charge of one-fourth of one centavo per kilowatt-hour (P 0.0025/kWh) of sales for NPC; and
- (6) Mitigation of the removal of cross-subsidies for NPC/PSALM and Distribution Utilities.

The Petitioners shall be deemed the Beneficiaries with respect to their corresponding STFs only upon and to the extent of the approval by the ERC of their petition for availment of the Universal Charge.

3.03 **Collecting Entities:** These Guidelines apply to the following entities mandated by the Act to collect or receive the Universal Charge, as set out in the ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge:

- (1) Distribution Utilities collecting from End-Users in the captive market;
- (2) Suppliers collecting from End-Users in a contestable market;
- (3) TRANSCO or its Concessionaire collecting the amounts remitted by End-Users and Self-Generation Entities which are not connected to a Distribution System.

Section 4: CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

4.01 The Main Trust Account - Universal Charge

- (a) PSALM shall open one (1) Trust Account, referred to as the "Main Trust Account - Universal Charge", with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF. Collecting Entities shall deposit their collections of the Universal Charge in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.
 - (b) Within ten (10) business days of the approval of these Guidelines by the ERC, PSALM shall provide the Collecting Entities with the bank details and account number of the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.
 - (c) If there are any amendments to the bank details and account number of the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge, PSALM shall notify all of the Collecting Entities as soon as possible but in any case within ten (10) business days from the effectivity of such amendments.
- #### 4.02 The STFs
- (a) Pursuant to Section 6 (a) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall create one (1) separate STF for each of the six (6) intended purposes enumerated in Section 3.01 (Petitioners for Availment). These STFs shall be established with the BTr or a GFI acceptable to the DOF.
 - (b) PSALM will make disbursements of the Universal Charge to the respective Beneficiaries from these six (6) STFs.
 - (c) PSALM will enter into an appropriate agreement with the BTr or GFI detailing the terms for the maintenance of the STFs and the transfers of funds to and from the STFs. The terms of the agreement shall be consistent with the specific purposes for which the STFs were created in accordance with existing laws, government rules and regulations.
 - (d) Amounts remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge will be allocated to the six (6) STFs pursuant to Section 7(c).
 - (e) Any interest earned on monies in an STF Account shall form part of such STF and shall be used for the same specified purpose.
 - (f) The charges, expenses, fees and other costs imposed by the GFI or BTr for the administration of the STFs shall be monitored and accounted for by PSALM. The charges, expenses, fees and other costs shall be debited to each of the STFs *pro rata* to the amount of money passing through each STF.

Section 5: REMITTANCE OF UNIVERSAL CHARGE BY COLLECTING ENTITIES

5.01 **Remittance Procedures:** To avoid the penalties and unnecessary costs brought about by a delay in the remittance of the Universal Charge, the Collecting Entities shall faithfully comply with the procedures set forth below:

- (a) Subject to Section 5.03 ("Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge"), each Collecting Entity shall remit its total actual collections of the Universal Charge to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge without need of prior demand from PSALM.
- (b) The Universal Charge amounts collected during each calendar month shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour of the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month. In the event that the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month falls on a non-banking day or holiday, all Universal Charge collections shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour on the immediately succeeding banking day.
- (c) For proper control and recording, each Collecting Entity shall submit all the necessary information to PSALM as required under Section 6 ("Provision of Information") at the same time as making its remittance to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.
- (d) All remittances of the Universal Charge shall be in Philippine Pesos and shall be made through any one of the following forms, in each case clearly identifying the Collecting Entity and the billing and collection month to which the remittance pertains:
 - (1) Cash
 - (2) Manager's/Cashier's Check
 - (3) Demand Draft
 - (4) Fund Transfer
 - (5) Company Check

- (e) PSALM shall confirm with the BTr or GFI the amount of the Universal Charge remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge by each Collecting Entity in each month. PSALM shall issue a confirmation notice to each Collecting Entity within five (5) business days confirming the receipt of its funds in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.

5.02 **Late Remittances:** Subject to Section 5.03 ("Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge"), failure of a Collecting Entity to remit without justifiable or valid reasons its total actual collections of the Universal Charge in each calendar month in accordance with Section 5.01 ("Remittance Procedures") shall subject such Collecting Entity to a late remittance interest charge and the fines and penalties provided in Section 8 of Rule 18 of the IRR. The procedures for late remittances are as follows:

- (a) In the event that any Collecting Entity collects amounts from End-Users in respect of the Universal Charge in any calendar month but fails to remit the same to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge on or before the last banking hour of the fifteenth (15th) day of the next calendar month, said Collecting Entity shall pay a late remittance interest charge on the amount collected and due but not remitted. The late remittance interest charge shall be applied to the difference between total actual collections of the Universal Charge for any calendar month and total actual remittances for said month, and will be calculated at the rate of five percent (5%) per month from the date upon which the remittance amount was due until the date when such amount is received in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge.
- (b) The late remittance interest charge shall be in addition to whatever amount of fine or penalty may be imposed by the ERC under Section 8 of Rule 18 of the IRR.
- (c) Any late remittance interest charges shall be remitted to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge for disbursement to the STFs *pro rata* to the allocation of other remittances between the STFs.
- (d) PSALM reserves the right to withhold any due disbursements of the Universal Charge to a Collecting Entity which has failed to remit its collections to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge or require the Collecting Entity to pay the late remittance interest charges in accordance with the procedures described herein.
- (e) In the event that any Collecting Entity consistently delays in or fails to remit its Universal Charge collections for more than two (2) months, PSALM shall request the ERC to take appropriate action under Rule 18 of the IRR.

5.03 **Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge:** A Collecting Entity which is a Distribution Utility authorized by the ERC to avail of the Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities in any calendar month is entitled to withhold from its remittance to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge an amount reflecting the Universal Charge approved by the ERC for such purpose for the relevant month, in accordance with the procedure provided in this Section:

- (a) In determining the amount which a Distribution Utility can net off from its remittance of Universal Charge to PSALM, the Distribution Utility shall not discriminate in its own favor at the expense of other beneficiaries in the event that actual collections differ from expected collections based on the level of kilowatt-hour sales used by ERC in setting the Universal Charge per kilowatt-hour (kWh). In such cases, the Distribution Utility shall only retain its proportionate share in the actual collection.
- (b) For the avoidance of doubt, a Distribution Utility must remit to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge the amounts of Universal Charge collected from its End-Users pertaining to the other categories of Universal Charge. The balance of a Distribution Utility's entitlement to Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities for any month will be disbursed to said Distribution Utility by PSALM from the Universal Charge amounts collected for that purpose by other Collecting Entities, in accordance with Section 7 ("Disbursements from the STFs").
- (c) Under no circumstances may a Distribution Utility withhold from its remittances to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge in respect of any month such amount in excess of that which the ERC has authorized said Distribution Utility to recover from the Universal Charge for its Stranded Contract Costs for that month.

Section 6: PROVISION OF INFORMATION

6.01 Recording Requirements and Procedures

- (a) In order for PSALM to monitor the proper remittance of Universal Charge collections by Collecting Entities for the protection of all End-Users, each Collecting Entity must furnish PSALM with relevant information on its billings and collections in each calendar month. The Market Operator is also required to submit information as set out in Section 6.04 so that PSALM may verify the information provided by Collecting Entities.

- (b) The statements or information described in Sections 6.02 through 6.03 in respect of each calendar month should be submitted to PSALM (by electronic mail or facsimile transmission) by each Collecting Entity to arrive on or before the fifteenth (15th) day of the succeeding month or in any case no later than the date on which the Collecting Entity remits its collections of the Universal Charge to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge. For documents sent by electronic mail or facsimile transmission, the original of said statement or report must be provided to PSALM within ten (10) business days from the remittance of the Universal Charge.

6.02 **Reports by Distribution Utilities and Suppliers:** In respect of each calendar month, each Collecting Entity that is a Distribution Utility or Supplier shall submit to PSALM:

- (a) A certified statement of its total actual billings of electricity separately identifying the total amount billed in respect of each Universal Charge component. Such statement shall include the total actual sales of electricity in kWh. The form for the Universal Charge Total Actual Billings Statement and sample calculations are attached hereto as Annex C1 and C2, respectively.

Billing adjustments due to erroneous meter reading, or arithmetical mistakes or omissions shall be reflected in the Universal Charge Billing Form, duly supported by a certified true copy of the debit

or credit memo issued by the Collecting Entity to the concerned customer.

Billing adjustments covering bad debts written off shall likewise be reflected in the Universal Charge Billing Form, duly supported by documents.

- (b) A certified statement of its total actual collections separately identifying the amount collected for each Universal Charge component. The form for the Universal Charge Total Actual Collections and sample calculations are attached hereto as Annex D1 and D2 respectively.
- (c) The statements identified in Sections 6.02(a) and 6.02(b) must be signed by the Chief Financial Officer or his equivalent or any authorized representative of such Collecting Entity.
- (d) A Collecting Entity which is a Distribution Utility authorized by the ERC to collect an amount of Universal Charge in respect of its own Stranded Contract Cost must identify in its statement under Section 6.02(a) the amount which it is authorized by the ERC to avail from the Universal Charge for this purpose in the relevant calendar month and the amount which it has billed to its End-Users for this purpose in the relevant calendar month. In its statement under Section 6.02(b), said Distribution Utility shall identify separately the amount collected from its End-Users for this purpose and the amount withheld from its remittance to the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge under Section 5.03 ("Allowed Withholding of Universal Charge").

6.03 Reports by TRANSCO

- (a) TRANSCO shall submit the statements described in Section 6.02 ("Reports by Distribution Utilities and Suppliers") in respect of its invoices to and collections from End-Users which are connected to the transmission system and not connected to a distribution system. In case TRANSCO does not meter and/or invoice any such End-Users on the basis of kilowatt hours of sales, TRANSCO will include in its statement under Section 6.02(a) the basis on which it has estimated the kilowatt hours consumed by such End-Users in determining the Universal Charge amounts which it has invoiced.
- (b) In respect of amounts remitted to TRANSCO (or its Concessionaire, as the case may be) by Self-Generation Entities not connected to a Distribution Utility, TRANSCO shall submit to PSALM a copy of the information which has been provided to TRANSCO by the Self-Generation Entities in support of their remittances. TRANSCO may summarize such information in the event that it is voluminous.

6.04 **Reports by Market Operator:** No later than the fifteenth (15th) day of each calendar month, the Market Operator shall submit to PSALM a summary of its actual meter readings in kilowatt hours for the immediately preceding calendar month separately identifying each metering point and the corresponding Distribution Utility, Supplier or End-User connected to the transmission system.

Section 7: DISBURSEMENTS FROM THE STFs

- (a) The STFs shall be disbursed only for the specific purposes for which the same were created in accordance with existing laws, government rules and regulations.
- (b) The STFs shall be disbursed and accounted for in accordance with the fundamental requirements for disbursement of trust funds as provided for under applicable law, including the Government Auditing Code of the Philippines (Presidential Decree 1445) and the Government Accounting and Auditing Manual promulgated by the Commission on Audit.
- (c) The BTr or GFI shall distribute all the funds received in the Main Trust Account - Universal Charge to the STFs based on instructions issued by PSALM no later than the 19th day of each calendar month (or, if this is a non-banking day or holiday, the next succeeding business day) reflecting the Beneficiaries' proportionate entitlements to avail of the Universal Charge. Sample calculations are set forth in Annex E.
- (d) To facilitate close monitoring of disbursements from the STFs and their use for the intended purpose:
 - (1) Each Beneficiary shall promptly furnish PSALM with a certified true copy of the order (or other relevant ruling) issued by the ERC setting out the Beneficiary's entitlement to the Universal Charge in respect of each year or each calendar month, as the case may be.
 - (2) In respect of each calendar month and consistent with the information provided under Section 7(d)(1), each Beneficiary shall properly complete and certify the Universal Charge Disbursement Request Form as found in Annex E and submit the same to PSALM on or before the seventeenth (17th) day of the next calendar month.
 - (3) PSALM will make no disbursement to any Beneficiary from any of the STF Accounts unless the Universal Charge Disbursement Request Form is accomplished in all respects and has been presented to the satisfaction of PSALM on or before the seventeenth (17th) day of the next calendar month.
 - (4) Subject to Section 7(d)(4) and Section 7(f), PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse funds from the relevant STF Account to the Beneficiary on the twentieth (20th) day of each month (or, if this is a non-banking day or holiday, the next succeeding business day), either through funds transfer or Manager's Check. In case of payment by Manager's Check, the Beneficiary's authorized representative shall have to appear at the PSALM offices with all relevant documents to demonstrate such authority to claim the Manager's Check.
 - (5) Within five (5) calendar days from its receipt of the funds so disbursed, each Beneficiary must issue an official receipt in favor of PSALM. PSALM reserves the right to make no further disbursements to any Beneficiary until it has issued such official receipt for the disbursement.
- (e) In the event that the balance in any STF Account for any calendar month exceeds the amount of the avallment request or requests submitted by the Beneficiary or Beneficiaries of such account for such month, PSALM shall retain the balance within the STF Accounts to pay for periods where a shortfall occurs.
- (f) In the event that the balance in any STF Account for any calendar month falls short of the avallment request submitted by the Beneficiary of such account for such month, PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse only such amount not exceeding that which is in the STF Account. In the event that there are multiple Beneficiaries of any such STF Account, PSALM shall instruct the BTr or GFI to disburse the balance available in the account between the Beneficiaries *pro rata* to the Beneficiaries' avallment requests for that month. The Beneficiary or Beneficiaries shall be entitled to recover any such shortfall in a later month in accordance with the true-up mechanism approved by the ERC for the relevant Universal Charge purpose.
- (g) Nothing in these Guidelines shall restrict the right of NPC (SPUG) to disburse a portion of the Missionary Electrification component of the Universal Charge to QTPs provided such disbursement is in accordance with law and with the approval of the DOE and ERC.

Section 8: AUDIT AND REPORTING

- (a) Acting in its capacity as administrator of the STF Accounts, PSALM shall:
 - (1) Maintain monthly records of each component of Universal Charge billings, collections, remittances and disbursements.
 - (2) Reconcile each component of Universal Charge billings, collections, and remittances with the books of accounts of Collecting Entities.
 - (3) Maintain records of Universal Charge avallments due and paid to each of the Beneficiaries in each month, including separate books of accounts for over-recovery of the Distribution Utility stranded cost component.
 - (4) Reconcile Universal Charge avallments due and paid to each of the Beneficiaries with the books of accounts of Beneficiaries on a monthly basis.
 - (5) Whenever requested by the ERC, inform the ERC of the outstanding balance of each of the STF.
- (b) As required by Section 6 (d) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall submit to the DOE and ERC on a quarterly basis a report on the remittances and disbursements of the STFs.
- (c) As required by Section 3 (f) of Rule 13 of the IRR, PSALM shall ensure that SPUG conducts proper monitoring, accounting and control of expenditures and efficient utilization of the Missionary Electrification funds from the Universal Charge. SPUG shall submit to PSALM a detailed yearly report containing:
 - (1) Historical actual Operating Costs separately identifying expenditures on fuel, lubricants, purchased power, personal services and other operating and maintenance expenses for the prior year and projected Operating Costs for the same categories for the current year and the next succeeding two years.
 - (2) Historical actual Capital Expenditures for expansion, rehabilitation and installation of facilities for new areas of development based on the approved MEOP for the prior year and projected Capital Expenditures for the same categories for the current year and the next succeeding two years.
- (d) As required by Section 5 (b) of Rule 18 of the IRR, each Collecting Entity shall maintain separate books of accounts for the collections and remittances to PSALM of the Universal Charge. Such books of accounts must be made available to the ERC and PSALM during business hours upon two (2) days prior written notice.
- (e) As required by Section 6 (e) of Rule 18 of the IRR, PSALM shall maintain separate books of accounts for the disbursements to Distribution Utilities of the Universal Charge for Stranded Contract Costs of Distribution Utilities and shall use the same to determine whether there has been any over-recovery by any Distribution Utility. PSALM will make such books of accounts available to the ERC for purposes of monitoring and accounting for sums collected from the Universal Charge.
- (f) Each Collecting Entity shall submit to PSALM a yearly audited report of total actual collections and total actual remittances of the Universal Charge.
- (g) In the event that PSALM discovers any discrepancy between expected and actual collections, or between actual collections and actual remittances, or any other indication that a Collecting Entity is failing to comply with these Guidelines, PSALM shall have the right to seek an explanation from such Collecting Entity or to refer the matter to the ERC for investigation.

Section 9: LIABILITY

- (a) PSALM shall not be held liable by any third party, including the beneficiaries of the STFs, for any non-remittance or partial remittance should the same be attributable to the fault or negligence of any of the Collecting Entities or any of its officers, employees, agents or assigns or any other party. Any Collecting Entity who is found by final judgment to be at fault shall immediately reimburse PSALM within five (5) days from demand of any amount expended by PSALM as payment for damages, expenses and other costs, incurred and paid pursuant to any settlement or legal proceedings, whether in the nature of administrative, civil or criminal, whenever PSALM is included as a party to any proceeding due to the fault or negligence of any Collecting Entity, its officers, employees, agents or assigns.
- (b) In accordance with the EPIRA, the IRR and the ERC Rules Governing the Collection of the Universal Charge, the ERC may impose sanctions on any Collecting Entity for its failure to comply with these Guidelines or any portion thereof.

Section 10: FINES AND PENALTIES

The ERC may impose the appropriate fines and penalties for any violation or non-compliance with these Guidelines as provided in Section 5 of the Guidelines to Govern the Imposition of Administrative Sanctions in the Form of Fines and Penalties Pursuant to Section 48 of RA 9138 dated May 17, 2002.

Section 11: AMENDMENTS

Any amendment to, or revision of these Guidelines may be proposed by PSALM, in consultation with the DOE and subject to the approval of the ERC

Section 12: SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

Should any provision or section of these Guidelines be declared unconstitutional or contrary to law, the parts not so declared shall remain in full force and effect.

Please download attached forms at the PSALM Website.

www.psalm.gov.ph >> Jobs and Opportunities >> Notice of Bidding


**NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
PANAY DIESEL POWER PLANT**
Dingle, Iloilo City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) NPC, PDPP, Dingle, Iloilo invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements:

Date/Time & Place of Bidding	Item Description	PR No./Inquiry No.	Approved Agency Estimate
Jan. 22, 2004 2:00 pm NPC, PDPP Conference Room, Dingle, Iloilo City	JOB ORDER Provide labor, tools, materials, equipment and other necessary items needed in the construction of proposed warehouse for 32 MW barges at West Area Complex, Bo. Obiero, Iloilo City.	PB104-2003-204	Php 1,029,621.00
Pre-Bidding Conference will be on January 7, 2004 at exactly 2:00 pm at the PDPP Conference Room, Dingle, Iloilo.			
Jan. 22, 2004 2:00 pm NPC, PDPP Conference Room, Dingle, Iloilo	JOB ORDER Provide labor, materials, tools, equipment and and technical supervision for repair of TIC rotorshaft assembly for Niagata T/C Model NA 445/450.	PB104-2003-154	Php 450,000.00

A Two Envelope Mode of Procurement shall be observed.
Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Section, Administrative and Finance Division, PDPP, Dingle, Iloilo with telephone number 351-0450 upon payment of non-refundable fee of Php 500.00 starting December 23, 2003 for PR No. PB104-2003-204 and Php 150.00 for PR No. PB104-2003-154. No bid documents will be issued on or after January 14, 2004.

Bid documents shall be received on the following dates and place, viz:
1st Envelope (technical documents) — January 14, 2004 PDPP Conference Room
2nd Envelope (financial docs) — January 22, 2004 PDPP Conference Room

Bid proposals and other tender documents shall be opened in the presence of the prospective bidders.

Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with IRR of R.A. 9184. Pass/Fail evaluation shall be observed.

A bidders Bond equivalent to 2.5% is required in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, GSIS surety bond.

A Performance Bond equivalent to 5% of the total contract amount, penal and callable on demand issued by the GSIS.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

(Sgd.) NELSON J. HOMENA
Plant Manager, PDPP

(PDI - Dec. 24, 2003 and Jan. 6, 2004)

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC) invites prospective bidders to apply for pre-qualification for the bidding of the San Fernando Airport Runway Lights Development Project under the Build-Transfer (BT) Scheme pursuant to R.A. 6957, as amended by R.A. 7718, otherwise known as the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Law, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

Interested Proponents are required to submit a Letter of Intent addressed to the Chairman, PPMC-Prequalification, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC), Poro Point Management Corporation, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaocay, San Fernando City, La Union.

Pre-qualification documents can be secured from the above address starting January 12 through 14, 2004, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. upon payment of a non-refundable fee of ONE THOUSAND PESOS (P1,000.00) and after submission of above LOI.

The deadline of submission of the complete pre-qualification documents is exactly 3:00 p.m., February 10, 2004. Prospective bidders shall present the original copies of documents or evidence for authentication purposes. Failure to comply with this requirement will be ground for disqualification.

The preparation, submission and evaluation of pre-qualification documents is governed by the provisions of the above BOT Law and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

PPMC reserves the right to reject any or all application for pre-qualification, waive any defect or infirmity therein, to accept the bid and to award the contract which is most advantageous to the Corporation.

For inquiries regarding the project, contact Engr. Virgilio M. Salayog, Head, Ports Management Division at Tel. No.: (072) 242-56-38.

(Sgd.) VICTOR G. FLORESCA
Chairman, PBAC

(PDI - Dec. 24, 2003 and Jan. 7, 2004)

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The 1st Ortigas Countdown

There is definitely no better way to celebrate New Year...

Everyone is invited to the

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Be among the few to witness history!

December 31, 2003

9:00 pm

Prestige parking, Carpark A,

ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center,

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(Fronting ADB Building

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In cooperation with

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Supported by:

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OBITUARIES

DEMETRIO PACELO TUVERA

Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 20, 2003 at the age of 88.

He is survived by his wife CELIA GALANG; children CARMEN, JULIE, MINNIE, MINA & ROGER, EMY & ANTHONY, RAYMUND and JAYJAY; grandchildren MICHAEL, RANDELL, CZARINA, DAVID and JOHN; siblings ANDRING & NITA, BAS & CED, FANNY, CERING and MARING.

His remains lie in state at Ambassador Funeral Homes, A. Mabini St. cor. C3, Caloocan City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 27, 2003 at Ever Memorial Garden, along North Luzon Expressway thru Lawang Bato Tollway Exit after the 10:00 a.m. Necrological Service.

JOSE EMMANUEL DE OCAMPO EVA, JR. "POCHOLO"

November 20, 1953 - December 22, 2003

His wife ALEXANDRA MIGUEL; children JED, STEVIE, CHUCK, MARTY, GINO, ARCHIE & MICKEY; grandson AIDAN; parents NUE & MERCY (+); sister PAMBI and brother-in-law BOBBY ARCANGEL; relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel 12, 3rd Floor, La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City until it will be brought to Legazpi City.

Interment will be announced later.

BEATRIZ DE VERA VDA. DE ELIZAGA

of Bulian, Sorsogon

Peacefully joined the Lord
on December 23, 2003 at the age of 99.

Her loving children Norma, Edna, Arturo Jr., Evelyn, Alex & Fortunato; stepdaughter Ester, children-in-law Pacifico V. Jose (+), Gil Aberilla, Aida Navarro, Reynaldo Reyes, Bernardita Huab, Nieve Garchitorena & Jose Lee; grandchildren great grandchildren, relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels, Guadalupe, Makati.

I am
the way,
the truth
and the
life.
No one
comes
to the
Father
except
through
Me.

John 14:6

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

ARLINGTON MEMORIAL CHAPEL

12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City;
Tels. 715-1025; 715-1031; 715-1027

ARLINGTON EAST THE GARDEN CHAPELS

C. Raymundo St. cor. Mercedes Ave.,
San Miguel Ave., Pasig City

Tels. 747-8599; 747-8609 • Telefax 641-1760

AUREA QUIOGUE FUNERAL HOMES

243 A.B. Fernandez Ave., Dagupan City, Pangasinan

Tels. (0785) 522-3451; 522-2128; (0917) 434-9976

CAPITOL MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.

1305 G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City

Tel. 732-0309; 732-1095

CEBU ROLLING HILLS MEMORIAL CHAPELS INC.

Cebu Branch: A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue

City, Cebu; Tels. 346-2543; 346-2601

COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.

Nivel Hills, Lahug, Cebu City;

Tels. 231-0721; 231-3192

COSMOPOLITAN FUNERAL HOMES, INC.

Camus Ext. cor. J. Abad Santos, Davao City;

Tels. (082) 227-1201; 227-1258

DAYAO FUNERAL HOME

#2 Bayani St., Galas, Quezon City; Tels. 740-2683; 781-

3705; 781-3688; 413-9400; 715-5594

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(047) 222-4512; (047) 224-2014

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FUNERARIA ANGEL QUIOGUE

No. 67 Pasig Boulevard Extension, Pasig City;

Tels. 641-7909; 641-1735

M. Almada St., Pateros, Metro Manila;

Tels. 642-3010; 633-3602

FUNERARIA FILIPINAS

187 Real St., Zapote Alabang, Las Piñas;

Tels. 873-0507; 873-0024

FUNERARIA FILIPINAS

865 J.P. Rizal St., Poblacion, Makati City; T

els. 890-3556; 899-8191

FUNERARIA TUASON

Poblacion, San Miguel, Bulacan 3011;

Tels. (044) 764-0281; 678-0266; (0917) 895-0603

FUNERARIA SAMSON

145 Bayan Luma, Imus, Cavite;

Tels. (046) 471-3375; 471-2675

GARDEN OF MEMORIES MEMORIAL PARK

Calsadang Bago, Pateros, Metro Manila;

Tels. 642-6181 to 82

HERITAGE PARK

Bayani Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila

Tels. (DL) 845-2341 to 42; (TL) 845-2334 to 38

loc. 110/112

HOLY GARDENS MEMORIAL PARK

Third Level, Unishoppo Complex

Quezon Ave., Angono, Rizal

Tels. 651-1711; 651-0737

HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL CHAPELS

Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat Rd., Sucat, Parañaque City;

Tels. 825-1296; 825-1291, Telefax: 825-1314

LA FUNERARIA LAWRENCE BAQUIRAN

#27 Crisologo St., Vigan, Ilocos Sur; Tel. 722-2730;

Cell (0917) 5680136; (0917) 5680145

Manila #23 Pato St., Project 2, Quezon City;

Tel. 434-3258

LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.

1501 C.M. Recto Ave. cor. T. Mapua, Manila;

Tels. 711-6931 to 35; 732-4795; 732-2827

LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.

143 G. Araneta Ave. cor. Kaliraya St., Quezon City

Tels. 749-3806 to 11; 712-3001; 743-8502 or 05

LA FUNERARIA PAZ, SUCAT, INC.

Dr. A. Santos Ave., Sucat, Parañaque;

Tels. 820-1592; 825-9947; 825-8635

LA FUNERARIA PAZ, INC.

79 Naguillan Rd., Baguio City;

Tel. (074) 443-3337; (074) 442-3117

LA FUNERARIA SAPIOSO

G. Tirona St., Imus, Cavite;

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OBITUARIES

"Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

Conchita T. Tan

Peacefully joined her Creator
 on December 23, 2003 at the age of 72.

Beloved mother to Juanito Jr. & Ma. Milagros, Catherine Grace,
 Arthur & Cynthia, Stewart & Agnes; grandmother to Karen Grace,
 Joseph, Patrick, Samantha, Patricia Margaret, Rachelle Victoria,
 and spouse to Juanito (†) who she now joins.

Her remains lie in state at Funeraria Paz, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be at 9:00 a.m. on December 27, 2003 at Holy Cross
 Memorial Park, Novaliches.

"For
 God so
 loved
 the world,
 that He
 gave
 His only
 begotten
 Son,
 that
 whoever
 believes
 in Him
 shall not
 perish
 but have
 everlasting
 life."

John 3:16

TITA MAYO ALTAMIRANO

Died in the Grace of our Lord
 on December 22, 2003.

Her bereaved sisters Cory and Opy,
 brother-in-law Khoo, nephew Gerald
 Francis, niece Katherine Anne; Aunts,
 Uncles, Cousins, relatives and friends
 request the pious readers to pray for the
 repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Lipa
 Cathedral Mortuary.

Interment will be on Friday, December
 26, 2003 after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Lipa
 City Cathedral.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

ZENAIDA GRAFILO CORVITE

of Sucat, Parañaque

Who joined the Lord on December 10, 2003.

Wish to convey our heartfelt gratitude to all those who
 offered Masses, prayers and flowers, visited and kept
 vigil, joined us in the burial rites, and in one way or the
 other consoled with us and showed love and concern
 in our time of bereavement.

"Eternal life will swallow up that
 which can die. God made us for
 this very reason and He has given
 us the Spirit as a guarantee
 that we will live again."

2 Cor. 5:4-5

When life reaches its sunset,
 it doesn't mean the end of a journey;
 it marks a new beginning of eternal
 peace. Rise up and take God's hand.
 Gone but not forgotten, deep in
 our hearts, we carry our loved-ones'
 memories to a special tomorrow
 when we will be united again... one
 at heart and one in heaven.
 Our loving sympathies.

OBITUARIES
 on
 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
 NATIONAL
 CLASSIFIEDS
 The Widest Reaching Classifieds

In Loving Memory

on the Tenth Death Anniversary of

DOÑA JUANA VILLARICA MARTEL

January 27, 1898 – December 25, 1993

Masses will be offered for her tomorrow, December 25, 2003
 at the following churches:

ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH	4:30 A.M.
A. Arnaiz Ave. Cor. Amorsolo St., Makati City	
MARY THE QUEEN PARISH	6:00 A.M.
Madison St., Greenhills, San Juan	
MINOR BASILICA OF THE BLACK NAZARENE	6:00 A.M.
Quiapo, Manila	
SANCTUARIO DE SAN JOSE	6:15 A.M.
Greenhills, Mandaluyong City	
SHRINE OF MARY QUEEN OF PEACE	6:30 A.M.
Our Lady of EDSA, Quezon City	
MT. CARMEL SHRINE	8:00 A.M.
Doña J. Rodriguez St., New Manila, Quezon City	
CHRIST THE KING PARISH	8:30 A.M.
Green Meadows Avenue, Quezon City	
ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGUORI CHURCH	11:00 A.M.
Magallanes Village, Makati City	
NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE MOST HOLY ROSARY	12:00 N.N.
Sto. Domingo, Quezon City	
SANCTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO	4:30 P.M.
McKinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati City	
ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE PARISH	5:00 P.M.
Kalayaan Avenue, Bel-Air II, Makati City	
ST. FRANCIS PARISH CHURCH	5:30 P.M.
Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City	
REDEMPTORIST CHURCH	6:00 P.M.
Baclaran, Parañaque City	
HARRISON PLAZA CHAPEL	5:00 P.M.
2/F, Harrison Plaza Shopping City, Malate, Manila	6:00 P.M.

Her children,

ENRIQUE

ANTONIO, JR. &

BELEN LOVINA TICZON

JOSE &

OLGA SEVERINO

CARLOS &

ETELKA JUNGSLAGER

RODOLFO &

ALITA ROMUALDEZ

RICARDO

Her Sister, ISABEL V. RAMOS

Nephews, Nieces, Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren request all pious
 readers to join them in prayer for the eternal repose of her soul.

"Lord, now You let Your servant go in
 peace; Your word has been fulfilled; my
 own eyes have seen the salvation which You
 have prepared in the sight of every people; a
 light to reveal You to the nations, and the
 Glory of Your people Israel."

- Luke 2:29-32

Filomena Lialcita
 Anzures, R. Ph.

(widow of the late Pablo M. Anzures, M.D. L.I.B.)

of Orani, Bataan and Sta. Mesa, Manila

Peacefully answered the call of the Lord
 on 22 December 2003 at the age of 89.

Her children Cristina and Cesar Castañeda,
 Carmelito and Emma; and grandchildren Cheryl and
 Joseph, Charina and Noel, Christine and Alex, Joey,
 Roselyn, and Patty; and great grandchildren request
 and will appreciate your prayers for her eternal repose.

She lies in state at the Mt. Carmel Chapel, Broadway,
 and will be interred at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat,
 today, December 24, 2003 after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at
 Mt. Carmel.



An obituary with a picture
 can be a fitting tribute
 to your departed loved one.

Always caring... INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

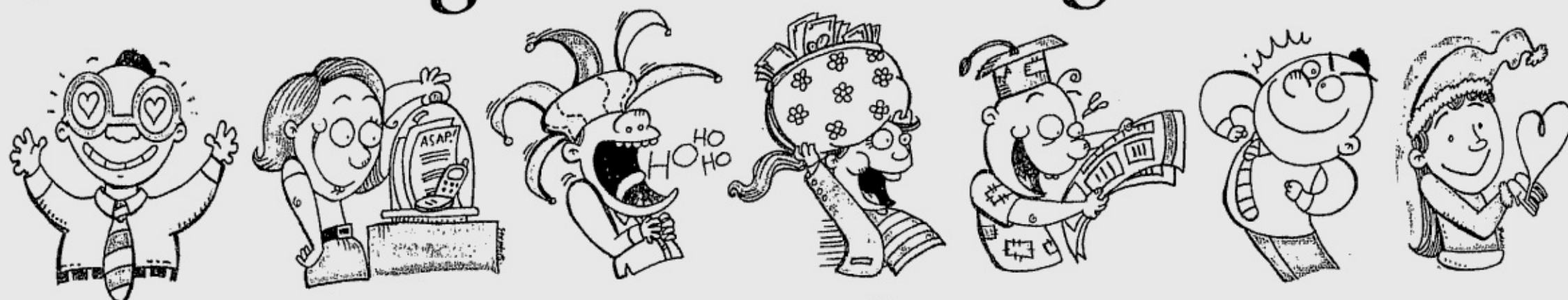
- ① Copy of Death Certificate ② Any identification document (I.D.)

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PEOPLEatWORK

Christmas gifts for working souls



A GIFT for everyday of the week: (L-R) special glasses, refreshments, laughter, thick wallet, empathy, awakening and kindness

By People at Work staff

TRADITIONALLY, Christmas gifts are given and opened on the first hour of Christmas day. However, People at Work columnists and writers would like to give early Christmas gifts to our readers. These gifts are not material ones but gifts that hopefully will warm your working souls. May all of you have a blessed Christmas!

From Bishop Precioso D. Cantillas: special glasses

I wish to give the working soul a new pair of "special glasses" by which he can "see" deeper into the value of his work and the wonders in the workplace. This "gift" is a new perspective of life and work seen through the "eyes of faith"—the eyes of the Child Jesus, the Savior of the world!

This special kind of gift, which is not something beyond the reach of the working soul but is just within, ready to be put on by him, makes him become ever alive and enthusiastic! This penetrating vision makes him enjoy working and allows him to reach self-fulfill-

ment and greater satisfaction. Putting on these "special glasses" will make the workplace and the whole world bright!

From Teresa Reyes Tunay: refreshments for the soul

I'd give refreshments. Not the packed burger-soda-brownie variety but refreshments for the soul such as: (1) A day alone at the zoo—talk to the animals, bring your own *baon*, and don't forget to pack along some peanuts for the elephants. (2) Crayons, a ream of Oslo paper and a tent for one—pitch it in some open space you like and draw your vision of a perfect you. (3) A week without cell phones and deadlines, *allelujah!*

Why would I think of giving such "nonsensical" things? Because the best way to refresh our soul is to unburden it and let the world run on its own, without us. And I'd wish for one final gift: liberation from the work-for-pay mentality, and a switch into the work-for-love mode—because if you put love first, money defi-

nately follows! I'd bet my neck on that!

From Candy G. Villanueva: laughter

Some people take their work too seriously. In fact, too seriously that work tends to overcome their lives. Often, we forget to sit back, kick off our shoes and savor the sunshine. Work, after all, is created for us to provide for our needs and ultimately keep us happy. If there is anything I would like to give to the tired working soul, it's the gift of laughter. Perhaps just a little reminder that life can still be fun and therefore relished.

I would like to remind the workaholic to try to be home perhaps an hour earlier because the reason she is working her butt off in the first place is to provide the kids with all the comforts and happiness money could buy. The wide-eyed tyke waiting at home can be tickled to squealing laughter and it won't cost a single cent. It would also be a pleasure to remind the uptight coworker that such a thing as a coffee break still ex-

ists for us to share a joke or two over a nice steaming cup of caffeine free cocoa. No matter how bleak things seem to be in these times, there still are a hundred and one reasons to smile about. The little baby in the manger is more than reason enough.

From Mario M. Banzon: thick wallet

I believe that Filipinos are inspired, efficient and hard-working people. Having said that, my gift has more to do with the wallet than the spirit. If I could give a gift to working souls this Christmas, I would give them, well, more money, or at least an adequate Christmas bonus given at the proper time. I've been in six offices in the last five years. I have attended two Christmas parties, and the complaints are almost the same. Delayed bonuses, measly salaries and better paying jobs. Yes, there are more things in life than having a thick wallet but this season it sure wouldn't hurt to have one. Cheers.

From Resty S. Odon: empathy

As a fellow slave to the grind, I can offer nothing—no 13th month, no bonus, no fruitcake. I am tempted to say prayers, but that's too easy. I guess since all I have are my essays, what I can offer is more empathy and more empathetic writing—here at PaW or elsewhere. All my published writings here have an underpinning of working class suffering. I try to avoid playing the role of the labor activist/hero here—let's face it, the labor cause should be credited to the Left—but nonetheless I feel duty bound to be my brother's keeper, but hopefully without the ideological baggage. I had held that work is God's curse on man since the fall of Adam, and that curse has been extended to Eve. But I have realized that work is an instrument to achieving human dignity, not just as means of livelihood. I wish to be a watchdog in affirming that dignity, especially in the age of so-called globalization. Meantime, I pray that

people out of work finally find jobs.

From Ernie O. Cecilia: awakening

I'd like to give a sincere prayer that working souls will soon awaken to the harsh realities of life, that they must take responsibility for their success and not depend on the government to improve their life. Working souls must not expect miracles after the 2004 election, whether it's GMA, FPJ, RSR or PL who wins as President. I wish the Holy Spirit would descend upon each working soul and the eventual winner of the presidential race and tell the latter that as a nation of consumers, we will always be enslaved by nations of producers.

From Regina Galang Reyes: kindness

I believe that nothing can soothe a tired working soul more than kindness. According to Thomas Risks, author of "Working Beneath the Surface," there are five existential wounds of the soul: deprivation, deprecation, isolation, rejection and

stultification. In the workplace, these wounds are inflicted everyday by bosses on subordinates, by coworkers to each other, by subordinates to bosses. We find bosses who stunt, instead of nurture, their subordinates' growth. We see supervisors belittling the efforts of their staff. We know of subordinates wrongly judging their bosses. We see employees' creativity being stifled. At work, many feel unappreciated. Doing a kind act this Christmas and every day of our lives will help heal the wounds of the spirit. Let us give encouraging, rather than discouraging words, thank rather than berate, be open rather than rush to judgment, and allow the flowering of ideas rather than stunting them. And, to really spread the Christmas spirit, let us all refrain from uttering cutting words that lead to darkness of understanding and instead give praise to everyone's strengths and God's goodness.

Connect with your audience



ILLUSTRATION BY ADRIAN PALANTIC

WORKING WOUNDED

Bob Rosner



DEAR WW: I've been selected to make a presentation at our industry's most important conference. I've always gotten good grades as a speaker, but this time I really want to knock their socks off.

Speak to Me

When it comes to great presentations, I have a soft spot in my heart for Elvis impersonators. I've seen an Asian Elvis, an Elvis with an Afro, a kid Elvis and I've paid homage at the Church of Elvis. But the king of Elvis impersonators is a Finnish academic best known for recording Elvis in Latin. His latest CD features Elvis songs in Sumerian. My only regret is that the Babylonians were born 2000 years too early to hear "Blue Suede Shoes" in their native tongue.

Now, these Elvises probably are making the king's hips roll in his grave, of course, but they do know one true thing: it's not enough to sing in tune. To succeed, they've got to stay in tune with the audience. And the

same is true for you in making a presentation. Below are some strategies to help you do this. For more, check out "The Lost Art of a Great Speech" (Amacom, 2000).

Audience's concerns

Do you get inside your audience's head? Great speeches are tailored directly to the audience's concerns. That's why Bill Clinton polls. That's why good speakers chat with audience members ahead of time or grill the event organizer about audience issues. That's why before each Working Wounded presentation, I ask audience members to complete a brief online survey that helps me tailor my talk 100 percent to their concerns. Today's technology makes it possible for great speakers to never again give a generic presentation.

Do you use humor? Do! (Please!) But to make it effective, keep it relevant to the points you're trying to make. Jokes from left field will make you look like a reject from the Comedy Underground.

Stories

Do you combine stories and hard data? Stories draw people in and help them remember; facts convince them that your points are trustworthy. A good

THIS IS how Christmas Eve usually begins at Working Mom Central.

In my once a year death-defying attempt to don Martha Stewart's apron strings, I cram for Christmas lunch. Already bleary-eyed from over two weeks of late nights doing overtime work, partying, and going on night market expeditions, attempting a full-course meal with all the must-impress trimmings is absolutely insane.

Culinary frenzy

Yet, every year, for the past ten years, I attempt the unthinkable. I lay out a sumptuous Christmas spread for my in-laws, carrying half my home kitchen to their kitchen (a two-hour drive away from Manila). All bent on making the Herculean feat seem most effortless and most natural. It's as if this once a year ritual could make up for the rest of the year when I didn't lift a finger to cook a meal, didn't even glance at the grocery list, abandoned menu-making to our *kusinera* of over 30 years, and didn't

speech needs both. Another way to think of it is: feed your audience's heads AND hearts.

Do you pack a surprise? Do you have at least one "showstopper" in your speech that every person will go home describing? I once saw a speaker rip his shirt off to reveal his core message written on his t-shirt. You don't have to go that far—but if you can find something unusual to reinforce your message, it will help the message stick. I use a variety of interactive exercises, including a magic trick, to drive home my main points.

Do you challenge them? Ask not what you can do for your audience, but what your audience can do for itself. The best

WORKING MOM

An Mercado-Alcantara



dare admit to my in-laws that I hadn't the slightest notion what my husband had for dinner every night because most of the time I wasn't home early enough to have dinner with him.

My sweet mother-in-law, who doesn't do any cooking herself and makes no pretense about it (telltale signs: no cooking oil, no salt, no garlic in her beautiful all-brick kitchen), always offers to let me off the hook. She says she knows how tired I must be from work. But I don't budge. I refuse to let go of this image of the dutiful wife, at least not at this time of the year. I put on a show, despite what working mom author Allison Pearson calls "deep-sea-diver tiredness, voyage-to-the-bottom-of-fatigue tiredness." So, wearing the "lead suit of sleeplessness" I throw myself into a culinary frenzy.

Last year, attempting to cook up a Thai feast, I betrayed my inexperience by slicing jalapeno chilies with my for-office-only hands. The seeds burned through my fingertips. I spent the rest of the lunch—and all requisite photo sessions—with my hands drenched in a bath of coconut milk (a home remedy prescribed by our veteran cook, who should have done all the cooking in the first place). The year before that, I scorched my arm on the grill as I checked if the steaks I had dared to put on the menu were done to "Hot Off The Grill" perfection. If they noticed the clumsy mistakes, my in-laws never let on. They let me go on with my charade, perhaps convinced that I needed to believe in this myth of a domestic goddess more than they did.

Breaking old habits

But why the show? Why not admit that this corporate slave needs the additional stress like she needs a bullet in the head? Because old habits are hard to break. When we're steeped in a compli-

cated life, we think it impossible to slow down. When we're always racing against the clock, the instinct is not to slow down but to pile on some more. When we're so exhausted from moving at warp speed all the time, we're sure we don't have the energy to reflect on how we can do things differently.

But we can do things differently.

In the last few years, out of the sea of working mom busyness and fatigue, has emerged a simplicity movement. It is a movement that says it is time to change: stop racing from one activity to the next. We're always rushing and always late, only because it makes us feel needed and important. But never truly happy.

Nothing but love

It is naïve to think the gurus of change are unique to our pressured times. The revolution really began some two thousand years ago in a little manger waged by a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. In the frenzy we call Christmas,

we have to remind ourselves of the strong message of this wonderful day. The savior was born with nothing but the certainty that hope and love is best found when we are stripped of our need to prove.

So how should Christmas Eve begin at Working Mom Central this year?

It must begin with the resolve to do nothing, to resist being the activity pack rat that we are. Instead, to keep expectations as simple as possible, let go of the baggage of image. Anchor instead on to the authentic self that says just being present is enough. It is enough to just sit down for a meal as a family, to glow in the warmth of each other's company, and to finally know, at least for this time of year, what my husband is having for dinner.

Have a very Merry Christmas, working mom!

(An Mercado-Alcantara is founding editor of Working Mom magazine published by ABS-CBN. You may write to her at an_mercado@abs-pinoycentral.com.)



PHOTO BY BUT LARIDO

PEOPLE at Work columnist, Tita Datu Puangco, recently launched her book, "Advice for the Anxious Pinoy at Work." It is a compilation of her best articles from her column, which is published in Sunday People at Work of this paper. Puangco (left) presents copy of book to INQUIRER chief finance officer Luis R. Ymson, Jr., and People at Work editor Regina Galang Reyes. To order copies of the book, call (632) 892-2895 to 96.

ENTERTAINMENT

And one film to rule them all

Final chapter in Lord of the Rings trilogy may just be best movie of the year

By Ruel S. De Vera

"IT IS the deep breath before the plunge," says the white wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen, who lends impressive heft to the film) while noting an eerie silence prior to the defense of Minas Tirith.

That can also be an apt description of the anticipation right before anyone views "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," Peter Jackson's rousing final offering in the J.R.R. Tolkien

trilogy. Because once Jackson unfolds his final trick up his sleeve, viewers will not be able to let go.

At the end of "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers," Gandalf, Aragorn (the brooding Viggo Mortensen) and Theoden (an excellent Bernard Hill) successfully repulse the Dark Lord Sauron's forces from the land of Rohan in the Battle of Helm's Deep. Isengard has fallen. But now, the dark forces approach the defiant land of Gondor, and the Fellowship of the

Ring must hurry to Gondor's aid.

Meanwhile, Frodo Baggins (convincingly weary Elijah Wood) and loyal sidekick Samwise Gamgee (Sean Astin, better in "Rudy" but still great as a hobbit) let themselves be led by the treacherous Gollum (the unrelentingly psychotic Andy Serkis) deep into Mordor, where they intend to destroy the one ring.

"The Return of the King" is Tolkien's final gambit, and so it is Jackson's as well. While he stays mostly faithful to

the book, Jackson (also one of the movie's screenwriters) makes the story more compact and adds his own touch to this third act.

"Return" opens, for example, with a fierce recollection of how the ring corrupted Gollum in the first place. That remembrance braces the audience for the disturbing changes occurring in Frodo as well, as the ring threatens to overwhelm him as well.

But it is on a broader tableau that

AND ONE/C2



CLOSING CHAPTER. Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen, foreground) and Legolas (Orlando Bloom, with the great hair) complete their journey.

Friends, fans show Jacko he's not alone

LOS OLIVOS, California—Friends and relatives of Michael Jackson descended on his Neverland Ranch to show their support for the entertainer who is fighting child molestation charges.

The private gathering behind the gates of the sprawling estate was described as a homecoming for Jackson, who has kept a low profile in Las Vegas and undisclosed locations since surrendering to authorities on Nov. 20 and being released on \$3-million bail.

"This event is to show Michael that he has the love and support of his friends and family," Jackson's spokesperson, Stuart Backerman, told reporters outside the estate.

The gathering—titled "You Are Not Alone" after a Jackson song—drew about 600 people, including celebrities such as tennis star Serena Williams, rapper MC Hammer, comedian Eddie Griffin and "American Idol" host and DJ Ryan Seacrest.

More than 450 cars entered the main gate of the estate. Fans ran up to a black Mercedes that carried two people who appeared to be Jackson's parents.

About 20 reporters staked out the gate, along with a dozen fans. One sign pasted on a car read, "Michael is innocent!! Leave him alone!!"

Jackson was charged Thursday with seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts upon a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent. He maintains his innocence.

Guests characterized the mood inside the estate as upbeat.

Musician Edwin Birdsong said Jackson was subdued. "He just said 'Hi,' and smiled," Birdsong told reporters as he left Neverland. "It was very festive and happy."

A gospel choir led by Andrae Crouch performed, Birdsong said. Other celebrities included actor Robert Townsend and former baseball star Darryl Strawberry, he said.

Actor David McKnight said friends, family and children whom Jackson has helped over the years took turns giving tributes. He said there was "a lot of food, a lot of eating, and a lot of celebration, camaraderie, holding hands, cheering and praising Michael Jackson."

Guest Katherine Rogers said Jermaine Jackson performed a song at the gathering and actor Tommy Davidson served as master of ceremonies. She said Michael Jackson looked "relaxed."

Asked by reporters how Jackson was faring, Backerman said, "He's doing fantastic. He's doing well. He's holding up fine. He's clearly fighting mad regarding the allegations."

Backerman declined to answer further questions about Jackson's legal troubles. As cars began leaving, passengers in one vehicle threw T-shirts reading "I support Michael Jackson" to fans waiting outside.

Jackson was looking forward to thanking people who have stood by him, said Brian Oxman, a lawyer and Jackson friend who planned to attend Saturday's gathering.

"It's for family and friends to say thank you from Michael to people he loves and who have supported him," Oxman said. "It's not a party. It's not a pep rally. It's not hoopla or celebration."

Jackson soon will travel to England to fulfill unspecified contractual obligations. Mark Beaumont of music magazine NME said he doesn't expect a rapturous welcome for Jackson if he goes ahead with his visit to England.

"There will always be the hardcore fans but that is a relatively small group now and people are becoming more suspicious," Beaumont said.

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BATTLE READY. Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) leads his army to an amazing battlefield.

And one film to rule them all

From page C1

Jackson sets up the rest of "Return." The movie's major battle is the defense of Minas Tirith, city of kings, the capital of Gondor. While Gondor's steward Denethor (John Noble) has been driven mad, Gandalf must rally the beleaguered Gondorian defenders while waiting for reinforcements. Theoden and the Rohirrim ride to the rescue. But it will be up to the true heir to Gondor's throne, Aragorn, to save his city.

All this Jackson stages on an amazing battlefield. "The board is set," Gandalf intones. "The pieces are moving."

Special effects and visual effects come alive as Rohirrim and Gondorians face off against Orcs and the Easterlings (humans who sided with Sauron) on their fearsome Oliphaunts. The pitch and scale of the battle recalls specifically the beautiful strife of Akira Kurosawa's "Ran" and the grim speed of Ridley Scott's "Gladiator." As the sword of kings is forged anew, sacrifices are made even as the ring fitfully makes its way to Mount Doom. The Black Riders ride the wind aboard horrific new mounts and darkness threatens to engulf Middle Earth. Aragorn must claim his throne and the ring must be destroyed.

Jackson infuses all of this with an infectious urgency, drawing us deep into the crisis on Middle Earth.

Yet he never forgets that "Return" is the crowning piece to the greatest fantasy story ever written. So he stages it as such. He

treats battles with a reverence for heroes and the fallen, a salute to courage. Yet "Return" is also about a child's unbreakable bond with a parent, such as Eowyn (flinty beauty Miranda Otto) and Theoden's touching connection.

Loving interpretation

"Return" is about friendship, such as that between Merry (Dominic Monaghan) and Pippin (Billy Boyd). But it is mostly about the combined strength of friends Frodo and Sam.

Will they have it in them to do what has to be done? And just how far will Gollum go to reclaim his precious?

Even those who have read the trilogy and know how it all ends will be caught up in Jackson's loving yet inspired interpretation of Tolkien's classic. "Return" is much more of an ensemble piece than the earlier two movies. "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" was the introduction and focused on Frodo while "The Two Towers" revolved more around the trio of Aragorn, Gimli (John Rhys-Davies, now stuck forever in viewers' minds as a grumpy dwarf with a big axe) and Legolas (Orlando Bloom, proving you can be heroic and have great hair).

"Return" brings all the players into almost equal action amid a backdrop of both the bleak (Mordor) and the majestic (Minas Tirith), accompanied by award-winning Howard Shore's mesmerizing score.

It may be over three hours long, but just try leaving to use the bathroom anytime dur-

'The Return of the King' may be over three hours long, but just try leaving to use the bathroom anytime during the movie. Dare.



FINAL GAMBIT. Director Jackson may have made the best fantasy film of all time.

ing the movie. Dare.

Piece de resistance

"Return" is not only a perfect missing piece to the "Lord of the Rings" puzzle, but it is the best movie of the three. Combining an innovative narrative sense with an eye for what works and saving his best tricks for last, Jackson puts all the disparate pieces together into a tantalizing whole.

"Things has been set into motion that cannot be undone," Gandalf says. So Jackson may have just made the best fantasy film of all time, a fitting adaptation to the single most important sword-and-sorcery tale of all time. If Tolkien's trilogy was the prototype, then consider Jackson's trilogy to be the ultimate trib-

ute. "The Return of the King" is the piece de resistance, the movie that changes everything.

Filmed back-to-back-to-back, the trilogy is proof that a passionate artistic vision and dogged determination (plus New Zealand's sprawling countryside) can still forge a modern classic.

In the end, "The Lord of the Rings" is all about the immutability of change and the price of destiny. "The Return of the King" is the rousing closing chapter to this journey to Middle Earth, a powerful, affecting film regardless of genre, and just perhaps, the best movie of the year.

Pioneer Film's "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" opens in Metro Manila theaters in January.

Survey says Jennifer has top tresses

WOODLAND HILLS, California—Polished fashionistas like Jennifer Aniston, who plays a Ralph Lauren staffer on the television sitcom "Friends," and the makeover crew on reality show "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" were singled out for having top tresses in a recent celebrity hair survey.

To determine the year's best and worst in hair, Wella conducted unsentimental surveys after the MTV Video Music Awards, the Emmys and the American Music Awards.

Aniston won best overall hair and best highlights, while other TV stars won some other categories: "Miss Match" star Alicia Silverstone's golden locks earned top honors, Jennifer Garner of "Alias" was named best brilliant brunette and "Will & Grace's" Debra Messing was called the most ravishing red-head.

The only pop star to rate a "best" rating was Britney Spears, who was named best blond bombshell along with Pamela Anderson.

Christina Aguilera and Pink made Wella's list, but in a "worst" category. Aguilera's "Dirty" black mane and Pink's streaks were named worst female hair color.

Rounding out the "worst" category was red



ANISTON best overall hair and highlights

carpet interviewer and E! host Melissa Rivers, for the worst red carpet hair.

When it came to the men, the Wella results were mixed. Besides the "Queer Eye" cast, "best" hair honors went to stringy-haired rocker Kid Rock and actor Rob Lowe.

For worst male hair, respondents singled out Justin Timberlake as the star they'd like to see with longer hair. AP

'Return of the Kings' expected to bring in \$125M

LOS ANGELES—"The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" is expected to gross a record \$125 million in its debut, according to preliminary box office figures for North America released Monday.

The estimated five-day take for cinema's latest installment of the classic J.R.R. Tolkien epic beats the previous five-day record of \$105 million grossed by "Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace" at its May 1999

opening, Encino-based Exhibitor Relations Co. Inc. said.

"The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" which earned \$102 million in its five-day opening in December 2002 now stands third on the list of highest-grossing films for its debut.

The latest release in the series, "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" is expected to gross \$73.6 million in the Friday-Sunday period alone.

Meanwhile, "Mona Lisa Smile" starring Julia Roberts opened in second place, with an expected take of \$12 million during the three-day weekend.

Earnings from Friday to Sunday are set to be at \$11.5 million for "Something's Gotta Give," last week's leader which slipped into third place, some \$7.3 million for "The Last Samurai," and \$5.4 million for "Stuck On You," in fifth place. AFP

Russel Crowe and wife have a junior 'Gladiator'

SYDNEY—Oscar-winning actor Russell Crowe and his wife are celebrating the birth of their first child, the actor's publicist said on Monday.

Crowe's wife Danielle Spencer gave birth to a 2.8-kg (6.2-pound) boy on Sunday night, publicist Wendy Day told the national news agency, Australian Associated Press.

"He's a healthy, bouncing baby boy looking forward to Christmas,"

Day said.

The child has been named Charles Spencer Crowe, said the publicist.

Crowe and Spencer were married at his Australian cattle property in April.

The former hard-drinking and brawling star has led a quieter life since his marriage and the announcement of Spencer's pregnancy.

New Zealand-born, Australian-raised Crowe won the 2001 best actor Oscar for "Gladiator" and was nominated for the same award the following year for "A Beautiful Mind".

Last week Crowe was nominated for a Golden Globe best actor award for his role in Australian director Peter Weir's seafaring epic "Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World". Reuters

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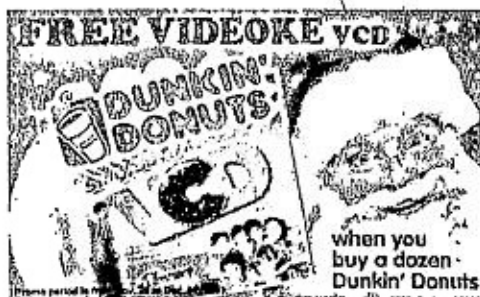
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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor



HOLIDAY HU BRAH

Here's the recipe for our special Christmas issue. A stylish and colorful Christmas dinner, a secret haven for

bargain-hunters and ukay-fanatics, a gift-shopping date with a hoop hottie, a time machine designed to take

you back to your favorite holiday memories, ways to give more of yourself this season, a list of

things to do before the clock strikes twelve, traditions new and old and surveys galore—all made with lots of

love. But read fast, dear reader. Today is a special day. Every

second spent with your family counts. Have a 2BU! Christmas!

2BU! SURVEY

If I were the jolly fat guy in red...

By Niño Mark Sablan
2bu! Correspondent

SANTA Claus is generosity personified. Fat, jolly, and clad in red, he's one of the people who take the spotlight every Yuletide season.

With a sleigh full of gifts, he slips down chimneys and leaves neatly wrapped presents for good boys and girls who behaved all-year long. But not before he takes a bite of that Chips Ahoy chocolate chip cookie and a sip of that milk.

Although some people believe he's blurring the real reason for the season, and many doubts and questions have been raised about him (Can he really fit in a chimney? How about houses without chimneys?), there is no denying he is a superb poster boy for gift-giving and sharing. A lot of people would feel privileged to be in his boots.

Here are some wannabes and the stuff they'd do if they wore

Santa's hat:

If I were Santa I would...

"...take the streetchildren and bring them to Star City."—Sherry Yu, 21, who plans to treat her friends at Star City on her birthday

"...give the gift of love to people like Bin Laden, Saddam and Bush, and to others who have the power to create chaos in the world. May they be touched (by the spirit of the season) so they can work together to bring peace and unity to the world. Merry Christmas yo!—Marjorie Oca, 22, who likes the song "Gift of Love"

"...hire other people to be Santas so I wouldn't have to exhaust myself."—Jomar, 19, who exhausted himself spending his 13th month pay

"...make traveling to Europe visa-free."—Pao, 23, who obviously doesn't have a visa

"...make Christmas a year-long

holiday."—Eric A., 24

"...change my wardrobe."—Juan Migs, 26, who doesn't like Onemig

"...give everyone a box full of love and peace. I think that's what we need this time, when everything seems to be in chaos."—Cheyenne, 23

"...give every Filipino one million pesos."—Shane Pasco, 22, who wanted to answer "Legalize marijuana" but was afraid his older sister might read it

"...enroll at Gold's Gym."—Menchu, 18, who doesn't need to enroll in any gym

"...take my son with me around the world and take a picture of us in every country, (to give) my son (something to) remember me by when he grows old."—Candy Manoloto, 23

"...grant the wishes of those living in Golden Acres."—DJ

"...kiss all beautiful mommies."—Milf, 20, who believes he's a good kisser

"...give Rudolph and the others a break and use a jetplane instead."—Starlet, 17, who is sick and tired of everybody having a version of "Leaving on a Jetplane"

"...gift myself with a year's supply of razor blades and shaving cream."—Aileen Piolo, 23, who doesn't shave her legs

"...dye my hair."—Belle Tabuac, 23, whose tresses would look good in any color

"...make little Santas."—Bianca Celdran, 21, who is not planning to have little Biancas anytime soon

"...be kinder to the reindeers by losing some weight."—Dana Valdriz, 24, who is kind to animals

"I don't believe in Santa Claus, but it's a very creative fantasy."—Jasmin, 21, who believes in Jesus Christ

E-mail the author at katotini@yahoo.com

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They won't be home for Christmas

These young people's stories will make you appreciate your family more this season



Name: Christian Bergara
Nickname: Ace
Age: 21
Occupation: Student
Ace is currently studying at the University of Portsmouth, taking up BSC

(Hons) Business Economics and Information Technology.

After graduating from high school, Ace was dead set on taking on the challenge of living abroad. And after some years at the Thames Business School, he went on to live his dream.

Ace has been living abroad for a year and will be staying in Britain for the holidays. "My father let me choose where I wanted to stay. There are certain things that I want to do for myself (it may seem selfish, and I guess it is) and certain sacrifices are not as difficult as it seems when you keep your eye on the goal," says Ace.

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

Britain

Where will your family be?

My family is celebrating Christmas in the Philippines.

How do you feel about that?

I find solace in the fact that my family knows why I have to spend Christmas away.

Is this the first time you're celebrating Christmas without them?

Yes

Which family tradition will you miss the most?

I will miss having the entire clan around during Christmas. We normally invite everyone from my grandparents to my aunts and uncles to spend Christmas Eve with us. I see Christmas as an event for children, and since all my cousins are still very young, I will especially miss seeing their excited faces when they start opening their Christmas presents.

How will you celebrate Christmas?

I've been spending this Christmas holiday working part-time and finishing up with my school work. I have friends staying over for Christmas as well, so I expect that we'll be spending it much like how we do it back home. On Christmas Eve, there will definitely be a big feast, presents under our lovely tree and merry music to set the mood right.

Zee Castro



Name: Merwein Flores
Nickname: Ayee
Age: 23
Occupation: Team Leader, Convergys Philippines

For 23 year-old Ayee, this is not the first time he'll be spending Christmas at work. He honestly admits that last year, being away from his family during Christmas eve got him sentimental and teary-eyed, especially when he got a phone call from his mom.

"It's still difficult even when you've thought you've gotten used to it," he says of his late-night work schedule. "But because I know my family understands, I'm at peace with my decision to go to work on such an occasion."

However, having found a second family at his new job, he says he is also looking forward to

celebrating noche buena with them.

"I'd probably observe Christmas another time with my family," he notes. "Because everyday can be Christmas with them."

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

I'll be on the sixth floor of the Tower 2 of the Enterprise Building, working.

Where will your family be?

Home.

How do you feel about that?

Deprived. It's rare that you find people working on that day, people who are willing to give up their holiday. I'll be one of them. I feel, though, that that is something for me to be proud of.

Which family tradition will you miss the most?

The midnight Mass and then the noche buena afterwards. It's rare for us to hear Mass as a family.

How will you celebrate Christmas?

As early as last week I've been slowly trying to celebrate Christmas in my own way. I've just spent two days in Baguio with my closest friends, where I also shopped for holiday presents for family and colleagues. But on the actual day itself, our company will have our noche buena catered for us. And then after work, I might hear Mass with my agents. *Jason Doplito*



Name: Kherwin Mateo
Nickname: Kherwin
Age: 24
Occupation: Works for Disney's PR Department in Orlando, Florida

Kherwin Mateo has been living abroad for a year and a half. He says that the things he misses most about the Philippines are his girlfriend ("Well, that's a given," he says.) and the small stuff.

"I miss the things I took for granted when I was there...fishballs, *taho*, the fact that I could buy just stick of *yosi*... Familiar things that make a place home."

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

At home in Florida.

Where will your family be?

In the Philippines.

How do you feel about that?

The holidays really make me homesick. Just the thought of all the parties and get-togethers I'm missing makes me sick...

Is this the first time you're celebrating Christmas without them?

It's actually my second Christmas away from home. During my first Christmas here, they flew in for a visit, so *ok lang*.

Which family tradition will you miss most?

The Christmas eve migration of my entire clan to our house. Like most Pinoy families, it's another excuse to get together.

Who do you consider 'family' in Florida?

I have relatives here, but I also miss and prefer the company of friends. *Zee Castro*



Name: Juvy Barrozo-Ledesma
Nickname: Supernanny, Buday
Age: 25
Occupation: Nanny

This would be her first Christmas away from her family. Though she was given the choice of going home, she thought that the extra income she'd earn this Christmas would come in handy for her children's enrollment.

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

In Manila, at the house of the family I'm working for.

Where will your family be? In Pangasinan

How do you feel about that? Sad. *Kasi nga wala sila sa tabi ko*

Is this the first time you're celebrating Christmas without them?

Yes. Despite having to work in Singapore and Hong Kong in the past, I always went home in time for Christmas.

Which family tradition will you miss the most?

Salu-salo sa noche buena.

How will you celebrate Christmas?

With my friends, mga kasamahan ko sa bahay. *Ruth Navarra*



Name: Paloma Mian Esmeria
Nickname: Paloma
Age: 22
Occupation: Model

For the past couple of years, Paloma has been jet-setting back and forth from Manila to other parts of Asia, working as a model. Her current assignment has taken her away from home for nearly three months.

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

Some Asian city.

Where will your family be?

All my friends and family will be in the Philippines.

How do you feel about that?

Of course, being alone and working abroad is really depressing. Honestly, it sometimes it makes me

feel crazy. Working abroad will make you realize that money isn't everything. The only motivation that keeps me going now is that I know that when I get back home, I'll be returning to those people that I love and whom I enjoy spending my life with.

Is this the first time you will be spending Christmas without them?

Yup.

Which family tradition will you miss most?

Noche buena! Never ending eating and tons of food and beer! Spending all that time with the people you love.

How will you spend your Christmas?

Since I'm away from my family and friends, I'll probably be spending Christmas with my close friends here. *Zee Castro*

Christmas, Hong Kong style

By Jay Mata
2bU! Correspondent

AH, Christmas. The time of the year when everyone remotely related to you comes out of the woodwork to join you under one roof and make merry.

You all gather one blessed evening in one large table filled with every dish imaginable, from honey-glazed ham to a large shiny *queso de bola*. When the clock strikes 12, everyone gathers around the Christmas tree to exchange gifts.

A very familiar scene—but also a scene that, quite frankly, entails a lot of stress for the host.

My family, like any other family, goes through the same ritual year after year. Last year, however, was different. My entire clan was going through various personal problems both big and small, and somehow it seemed inappropriate for the family to get together for Christmas.

That's when my parents decided to try something new. We wanted to see what Christmas was like in other countries. Surely not everyone celebrated Christmas the way Filipinos do!

Our pick? Hong Kong. So we packed and flew to the land called the Fragrant Harbor, a few days shy of Christmas Eve.

End result? A culture shock that was staggering as it was pleasant.

The very first sign that showed how Christmas was different in the Philippines was the almost unsettling hustle and bustle of the streets.

Unlike many Christian countries which consider the holidays as a time to be with the family, Hong Kong's denizens celebrate by hanging out with friends.

Carousal

In other words, it's *gimik* time. On Christmas eve, every bar, disco and mall was open and packed with people. Our Chinese host even said we would be crazy to spend the night locked in our hotel room!

We learned that in the hours leading to midnight, the Hong Kong government closes key roads in the major districts, because everyone would be outside shouting Merry Christmas and partying in the streets.

The crowds far exceeded the number of people that joined People Power—combined. I am not exaggerating. I mean, you have college students hawking every kind of Christmas trinket from reindeer headbands to sparkling Christmas pins to candy canes. You have elementary students visiting every restaurant to sing En-



THIS picture was taken less than an hour before Christmas. By 12 midnight, the entire city is out partying in the streets.

glish Christmas carols they probably don't understand the words to.

You have makeshift stages built everywhere where Hong Kong celebrities can perform. You have showgirls dancing near discos in sexy Santa outfits that would make even the Sex Bomb Dancers blush. You have people bar hopping and drinking like it was Oktoberfest.

You have arcade systems and computer games lined up for anyone who wants to play. Smack dab in the middle of the street! And all of these are happening within minutes of midnight!

Quiet dinner

After a couple of hours walking through all that hoopla (adrenalin running from all the noise and boundless energy that you never thought was possible), our Chinese host decided to treat us to a nice quiet dinner in a nice quiet restaurant.

We talked about the cultural differences of the holidays. Our host's children were out partying and the old people, like our host, spent the holidays quietly in nice establishments like the classy restaurant we were in. Which was fine by us since we Filipinos spend the holidays just like that anyway.

Still, the restaurant itself looked more like a birthday party than a Christmas one. The usual Christmas décor were there, but for some reason noisemakers like rattles and

makeshift trumpets made their way into Christmas celebration (Didn't I say it sounded more like a birthday?)

After a sumptuous meal and good laughs we braved the massively packed crowd once again to reach the sanctuary that was our hotel room. The adrenalin finally subsided and the urge to sleep prevailed.

Maybe it was because they weren't predominantly Christian like we are, but they simply weren't all that concerned over what we would think is a solemn day. Christmas to them is one big street party.

If you actually think about it, however, it essentially is no different from our Christmas. After all, everyone was being nice to even perfect strangers, everyone was up in arms singing carols and everyone was genuinely happy and nice.

I believe the reason for this almost contrasting yet somehow similar views of Christmas is because to them, it symbolizes happiness and goodwill, and it just so happens to be the day a saviour was born and he represents that goodwill, even he isn't from their religion.

Whether it be with family or friends, clan gathering or *barkada gimik*, the heart of Christmas remains the same. That is all the comforting thought I need on this holiest of seasons, I will remember that as we return there again this year, ready to partake of one big party for one famous birthday boy.

The former British territory celebrates the holidays in all-out consumerist fashion

Before the stroke of midnight, I will . . .

By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU! Correspondent

CHRISTMAS is huge. Dec. 25 always seems to be such a short day because of the many gatherings to attend, people to exchange gifts with and godparents to bug.

What's interesting is that even if Christmas is the red-letter day, so much more happen weeks before it. In a country where the yuletide season officially starts on the first "ber" month, everybody knows that party preparations, décor-buying and gift-shopping should be done as early as possible.

Still, everyone always ends up as frazzled as the procrastinators.

Today, the day before the big one, it is still not too late to do some stuff in the name of Santa.

Here are some things we all should've done before but were just too occupied and lazy to do. Others are challenges we all can take up for the sake of having some Christmas spirit.

Whatever the case, you better read fast and figure out if you need to do one of them really quick.

1. Re-check the lists. Make sure you didn't miss anybody. In case you forgot someone or haven't gotten presents for some, pray to your god that there's some decent store open. Or you can be creative and resourceful.

Remember, giving certain gifts to particular people after Christmas day sometimes suggests how much or how little you value them.

2. Whip out your phone book and get your cell phone ready. Make those calls and prepare your thumb for some major challenge. Everyone has a *noche buena* to attend and mind-boggling stuff to mind so it will be understandable if the greetings come in a little early (or extremely late).

Reserve the midnight call or

text message for family members who are far or that special someone you want to spend forever with. Besides, with everyone pressing "Send," there's bound to be some traffic in the airwaves.

3. Do your share. Some of the young just sleep the day away, waking up in time for grub and gift-opening. Wouldn't it be more fulfilling if you threw in a percentage of yourself into the preparations?

Whether it's bringing five boxes of fruitcake you bought with your own money or grating the cheese for five trays of spaghetti, doing one's share strengthens the bonds and is proof of how generous and giving a person is.

4. Get ready for some memory-making. Twelve midnight isn't just a time for hugging, eating and exchanging gifts. It's also a cue for some frenzied Kodak moments (or Agfa moments, whatever). Have batteries fully-charged or on reserve and load up on film or memory sticks.

5. Make a difference. Reconcile with enemies. Go out and give away food and some of your old stuff. Christmas is always a dramatic time for patching up. Generosity should always be practiced especially during the season of sharing. If you still haven't worn your Santa hat, don it today.

6. Pray. I don't want to sound all preachy-preachy here but Christmas is sure a nice time to do as MC Hammer says. Pray for the less fortunate who don't have anything to eat at 12 midnight. Pray because you have food on the table or tables. Pray because you're with the special people in your life. Pray because you're alive, experiencing all the wonder and joy only Christmas can bring.

E-mail the author at katotini@yahoo.com



Name: Cristina Bautista
Nickname: Tina
Age: 26
Occupation: Senior associate in an auditing firm
Countless Filipinos have left the country in search of a better life. While a lot of them have the luxury of returning home for the holidays, some have no choice but to spend

this special day in a foreign land, away from the comforts and the familiarity of home. Cristina Bautista is one of these people.

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

New York City, USA

Where will your family be?

Makati, Philippines

How do you feel about that?
Mostly sad, because it feels like I am missing out on something important, some of the best and happy times of the year, as I am not there to experience the holidays with my family.

Is this the first time you're celebrating Christmas without them? Yes.

Which family tradition will you miss the most? We really don't observe any of the traditions per se, but I would definitely miss just spending time together, staying up late talking and laughing.

How will you celebrate Christmas?

I am going to spend time with my international friends who are in the same mobility program with me in New York City. **Pam Pastor**

Name: Ricky A. Legaspi
Nickname: Ricky
Age: 26
Occupation: Security officer, Loyola Grand Villas

Since becoming a security guard eight years ago, Ricky Legaspi has rarely spent Christmas with his family. As one of the security officers of Loyola Grand Villas, a private subdivision along Katipunan, he has dealt with bratty celebrities, rowdy teenagers, and drunken construction workers to keep the peace and quiet in the subdivision all day long.

However, for security officers like him, it isn't the long hours which make work difficult—it's the loneliness of working alone during the holidays, keeping watch over merry-making families not their own.

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

On duty. *Madalas kami naka-duty habang noche buena, Bagong Taon pa minsan. Pinapag-usapan na lang namin kung sino ang babantay, kung Pasko o Bagong Taon ang pipiliin nila. Kung sakaling hindi pumasok ang kapalit na guardiya, nalasing kunyari, di diretso hanggang susunod na araw yun.*

Where will your family be?

Nasa bahay, naghihintay. Aantayin na lang nila na dumating ako.

How do you feel about that?

Malungkot, kasi noche buena... *Madalas, madami pa naman akong bisita.*



Minsan, ako yung nag-limbata, pero ako yung hindi nakakapunta. Sila-sila rin yung nagsisimba, hindi ako nakakasama kasi bagsak na yung katawan ko. Mahirap ang trabaho ng guardiya kasi walang day off.

Masipag naman ako pumasok, basta duty, duty. Bumabawi na lang ako sa pamilya ko kahit na hindi Pasko. Nagpa-party naman kaming mga guardiya minsan, kaya lang pag na-late dumating sa shift yung kapalit kasi nagpa-party pa, tatagal kami sa poste, tapos walang maabutan.

Which family tradition will you miss the most?

Yung pamilya ko mismo. Naghahanda sa bahay, may bisita.

How will you celebrate Christmas?

Pag-tapat ng 12, ayun, pasko. Tawag lang sa bahay, nag-aantay ng abot ng residente. Pero pagdating ko sa bahay, naghahanda talaga kami. Hinihintay ko na lang yun. **Blanca Consunji**

Name: July Lantao
Nickname: July
Age: 25
Occupation: Convenience store clerk

If your name happens to be July Lantao, it means Christmas Eve and Christmas day will just be another two ordinary days spent in the ubiquitous Mini Stop convenience store planted in the sprawling metropolis of Makati.

The Negros Occidental native, who's worked through Christmas last year in a factory, has resigned himself to the fact that it's all part of the job. A girlfriend who also works in another Mini Stop store is his closest semblance of family in the city during these days.

Where will you be on Christmas Eve?

"Dito sa Mini Stop."

Where will your family be?

"Sa Negros Occidental."

How do you feel about that?

"Siyempre, malungkot pero walang magagawa. Trabaho nangunguna. Pero nakasanayan ko na."

Is this the first time you're celebrating Christmas without them?

"Hindi. Pangalawang taon na ito."

Which family tradition will you miss the most?

"Iyong samahan at kainan."

How will you celebrate Christmas?

"Dito lang kami sa pasko sa Mini Stop kahit walang customer. Pero sa New Year's Day, day-off namin at pupunta kami ng girlfriend at mga kaibigan ko sa Star City." **Linus Velasco Tiu**

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Dec. 15-19	10 am to 10 pm	Mon. to Fri.	P500	
Dec. 20-Jan. 4	10 am to 12 mn	Mon. to Sun.	P500	10 pm
Dec. 24 & 31	10 am to 7 pm	Wed.	P500	7 pm

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Goldilocks
Funfeast
Kainang - handa na!

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A marvelous last-minute shopping trip with Marvin Cruz



UP's hoop heartthrob does a quick 'tiangge' detour to buy gifts for his family

"AYUN! Something for the house, pare!"

Text and photos by Emmanuel V. Papa
26U! Correspondent

MARVIN Cruz made an impression when he helped lead his high-school team, the UP Integrated School, to its first ever UAAP junior basketball championship last 2002. When he entered UP's college hoop team this year, he generated more waves. This rookie pointguard from Bulacan showed UAAP aficionados that he could take on veteran court-generals (as well as the big men). With his patented "shake-pause-slash-stop" jump-shots and heart-stopping drives to the basket, he quickly earned the monicker "Marvelous Marvin."

A MARVELOUS/E3



CHOOSING the right wallet...



"THIS soap looks cool."



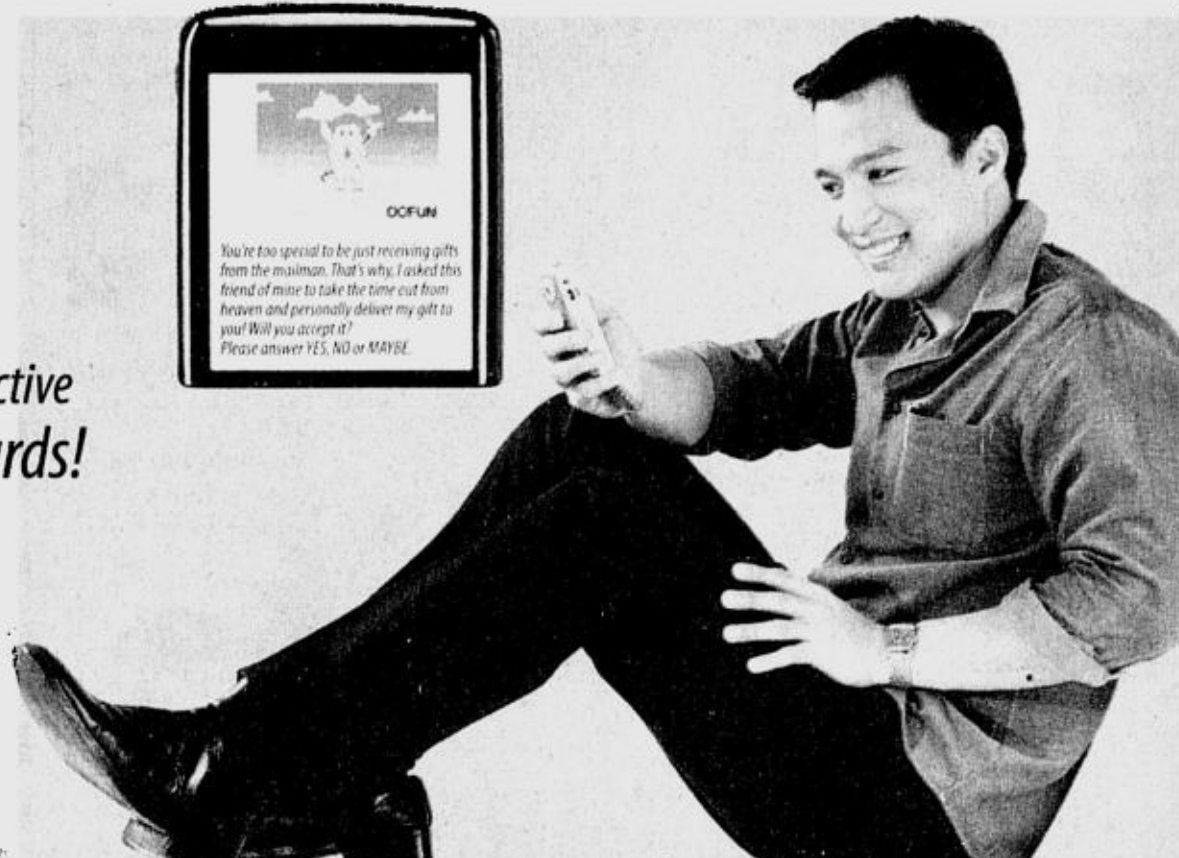
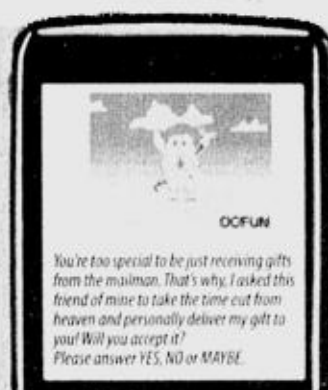
"DITO kami nagtagal."



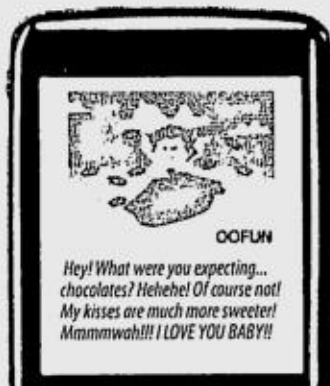
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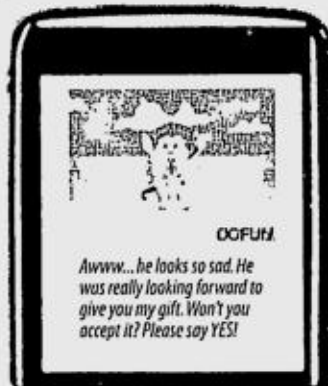
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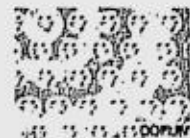
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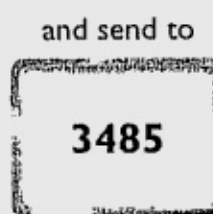
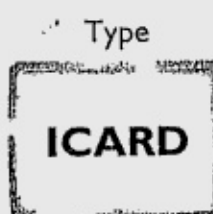
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BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT

MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL



ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO

KENKOY KLASIKS

BY TONY VELASQUEZ



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are hardworking, organized and quite psychic. You have visionary qualities. You also have a rare talent for overcoming obstacles. Your positive attitude gives you strength, and in turn, this inspires others. You have sexual magnetism. This year is highly social and entertaining. New relationships can develop. Birthdate of: Ricky Martin, singer; Diedrich Bader, actor; Ava Gardner, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a wonderful day for all kinds of group activities. Social times with friends are lively and energetic. Don't hold back—be friendly!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a wonderful day to advance your ideas or make proposals to important people. Others easily respect you now. In fact, some envy you!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Plans related to foreign countries, long-distance travel, publishing, the media and anything having to do with the law or higher education are extremely favored today. Move forward with your ideas!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Be receptive to what others offer to you today. Gifts and goodies can come your way. You definitely stand to benefit from the wealth of others.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Now is the time to smooth over ruffled feathers with close friends and partners. You are charming and diplomatic. You will find a way to be heard, and your views will be respected.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): It's quite easy to get the cooperation that you desire from co-workers today. People want to help you! Your charming manner and pleasing personality help to promote this.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is a wonderful day to fall in love. At the very least, flirt with someone! You feel playful, prankish and ready for fun. The arts, activities with children, and sports are especially favored.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a good day to make attractive changes at home. Purchase beautiful things for home and family. Buy a gift for a family member if you can. (It can be tiny; the thought matters most.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): It might occur to you today just how much love there is in your daily life. It is all around you. Don't hold back from showing others that you appreciate their presence.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Shopping for beautiful things will delight you today. Treat yourself to goodies, and treat loved ones as well. (Even if you're broke, you can buy a candy to sweeten your day.)

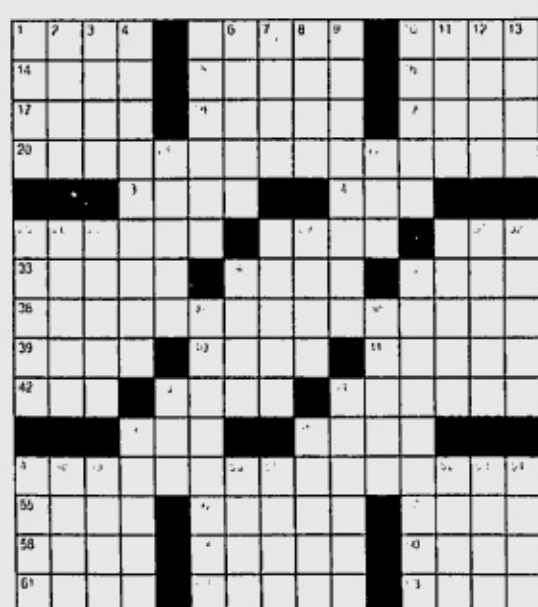
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Three planets are in your sign now, including fair Venus. This makes you unusually sociable and charming. Your popularity rating goes up today!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Although you are unusually social now, try to find some time for a bit of solitude today. You need a few moments of peace and quiet.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Lost traction
- 5 Purple shade
- 10 Stoc Roman philosopher
- 14 Theater section
- 15 Ms. Rogers St. Johns
- 16 Economist Smith
- 17 PC symbol
- 18 Places at the table
- 19 Chinese deer
- 20 Excels on the diamond
- 23 "Battle Cry" writer
- 24 Cohort of Curly
- 25 Non-student local
- 28 Indian Ocean gulf
- 30 Tummy muscles
- 33 Put into effect
- 34 Spin or speed ending
- 35 Theater award
- 36 Excels on the links

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

12/24/03

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

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- 1 Narrow cut
- 2 Ness
- 3 Borodin's "Prince"

- 4 Accuses
- 5 Dog star?
- 6 Fruits of the mind
- 7 Tilt to one side
- 8 Countertenor
- 9 Soft wool
- 10 Hindu class
- 11 Collier's access
- 12 Proceeds
- 13 Actor Sharif
- 21 Court orders
- 22 Saturn model
- 25 Arizona State's city
- 26 Broadcasting
- 27 Boat trails
- 28 Coral ring
- 29 Gateway rival
- 30 Cancel, NASA-style
- 31 Simon's I.Q. partner
- 32 Shabby
- 34 Cartoonist Silverstein
- 35 Thin paper
- 37 Curse
- 38 Drive
- 43 Racetrack stop

- 44 Pick
- 45 Mary of "The Maltese Falcon"
- 46 '50s hit "Wake Up Little"
- 47 Hinged fastener
- 48 Mr. Nastase
- 49 Mosaic piece
- 50 Notable times
- 51 Does not allow
- 52 Architect Saarinen
- 53 Birthday separation
- 54 Lohengrin's love

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON



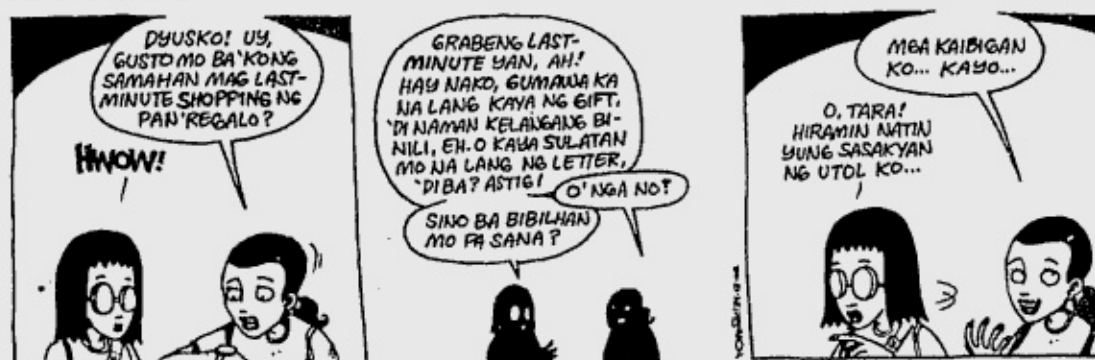
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO



KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA



LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO



TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING





ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

Young adults now see the holiday as 'Celebrate God's Love' Day

The Christmas alphabet

By Arlene M. Paredes
2bU! Correspondent

WHEN friends and I talked about Christmas these past few weeks, we would invariably conclude that unlike some 10 years ago, it has become almost just another day in our calendar. We consider this proof positive that we have indeed grown older, somehow.

But we refuse to let stress and well, age, to get the better of us.

All the hassles of young adulthood are not enough reasons for us to be un-merry at Christmas.

We want the Christmas spirit to live on as much as we want to pass on the tradition to our kids and perhaps to our grandchildren, too. We figured that we had not completely lost interest in Christmas, just learned to look at Christmas differently.

For instance, Christmas now means more than presents or *aguinaldo*. Before, it was simply "Jesus' Birthday," a day to get gifts.

Now, it has become more "Celebrate God's Love" Day—spread cheer and do some good deeds. After all, it was because of God's great love for humankind that Jesus was born.

Although Dec. 25 is not really the birth date of Jesus and although we are supposed to celebrate God's love every day, it doesn't mean we can't follow a good tradition of spending one day in the calendar reflecting on the message of Christmas.

Let us not make Dec. 25 just another day. 2bU! encourages you to breathe the Christmas air and help spread the joy of Christmas to all the people around you. From Dec. 26 onwards things might be back to "normal" so make some lasting and special Dec. 25 memories. You may just have a much longer and more meaningful Christmas season this year.

How do you start? With yourself, of course. Spread Christmas happiness and cheer like you would a perfume; let others get a whiff of it by wearing it.

As for me, I get into the spirit of the season with my own "Christmas Alphabet."

C—is for Christ Jesus. To give Him thanks and praise, I will attend the Christmas Mass with people close to my heart.

H—is for Happiness. It grows from the seeds of love, faith and hope. So I'll try my best to pursue these three to grow happiness in my heart. I won't depend on other people

to give it to me, I will pray for it to grow inside of me.

R—is for Remembering special people, especially those who are far away but have made such a strong impact in my life by helping me in many ways. I will include them in my prayers on Christmas time and beyond.

I—is for "I," which will be taken out of the center of the universe so that I can start praying more for "them," "they," "he," "she" and even "it."

S—is for Solemnity. Christmas is solemn and so shall be my day. But that does not mean that I will rein in my sense of humor. I will just take the season seriously.

T—is for Treasures, otherwise known to me as my best friends. They are my family, they make me want to look forward to better days. I will make sure that they know how much I love and cherish them by giving them something special this Christmas.

M—is for Miracles. I will try to be someone's miracle on Christmas. Without much resources, I could only give the needy some little help. But I hope that whatever little I give would go a long way.

A—is for Amends. I have been reckless with people's friends, strangers and others' feelings. I have made some mistakes, intentionally or not. I will try to make amends. And, at the same time, I will forgive the others who have been reckless with my feelings, too.

S—is for Simplicity. I will keep things as simple as possible, for a change. Complications can really be stressful so if anything can be simplified without making it lose its purpose, I will do it. For instance, the celebration of Christmas does not have to be very complicated. It could be less stressful without missing the point of the entire celebration. It could be as simple as a sincere prayer coming from the heart and soul.

I'll start from this list in my Christmas thoughts and plans.
I hope you have a meaningful and merry Christmas!

E-mail the author at lhen@postmark.net

Marvin's holiday wish list



Marvin usually buys gifts that are affordable and practical. For his mom, he looks for things that can be of use in the household, like kitchen appliances. He also tries to look for the perfect pair of basketball shoes for his 11-year-old brother Mark, who, as Kuya Marvin attests, is already a very skilled basketball player despite his tender age. As for his dad, Marvin looks for shirts.

Now, as his jersey number indicates, Marvin narrows down his Christmas wish list to 11. Let's take a peek.

1. A brand new red Honda Accord
2. Rubber shoes
3. To be with my special someone (naks!)
4. A Michael Jordan jersey
5. Good health
6. New set of rims for his car
7. A new guitar
8. Complete set of Michael Jordan cards (this seems impossible, Marv, hehe...)
9. House and lot (laughs)
10. To be injury-free in the next season
11. A successful and rewarding basketball career

A marvelous last-minute...

From page E1

Last Dec. 18, I accompany Marvin to do a some quick, last-minute shopping just hours before he rides the bus back to his hometown.

From his dormitory in the UP campus, we drop by the *tiangge* beside the UP chapel. Hmm, let's see if Marvin is also marvelous in picking the right gifts within a limited time-frame.



FINALLY! Gift number one, "Babalikan ko yung wallet."

BEYBLADE HIGH SPEED CHALLENGE

BEYBLADE YEAR-END CUP

Shangri-La Plaza Mall
Grand Atrium
December 28
Sunday, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm

presented by

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SINGLES CATEGORY

1st: P10,000 Cash Prize
P5,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

2nd: P5,000 Cash Prize
P3,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

3rd: P3,000 Cash Prize
P2,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

4th: P2,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

TEAM CATEGORY

1st: P6,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

2nd: P4,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

3rd: P3,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

4th: P2,000 worth of Beyblade showcase plus trophy

Will dugongs soon become as mythical as mermaids?

The Philippines is one of the countries where the dugong (*Dugong Dugon*) can still be found. Dugongs are shy, slow herbivores that live all their lives in their marine environment, grazing on seagrass much like cows at pasture. They are sometimes mistaken for mermaids by sailors at sea. Dugongs are the janitors of seagrass beds, that in turn ensure the health of offshore fisheries and coral reef ecosystems. But because dugongs neither reproduce quickly nor often, the use of illegal and indiscriminate fishing methods in coastal areas can very easily diminish an already small population.

Our children deserve a living planet.

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Example: Text WWF EDUGSAVE

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A SCIENCE experiment gone horribly wrong

The Diliman lantern parade is a unique Christmas tradition



DON'T worry, the wound's only for a day.



MAN, woman or beast? The bearded lady strikes a pose.



JUST a regular day in UP

Parade of unity

Text and photos by
Kristine Lim
2bU! Correspondent

AT UP Diliman, you know it's Christmas when lights are strung across building rooftops, quaint Nativity scenes made of soda cans and recycled materials are put up and the student population become restless and distracted (due to unreturned library books and looming deadlines).

But the true sign of Christmas in Diliman comes in the tradition that is uniquely UP No, not the streaking frat men that is the Oblation Run, but the annual Lantern Parade.

The parade is well attended. People fill the streets where the parade will pass. Students don costumes and

join the parade. Former students come to see old friends and renew ties. Families from the nearby barangay look forward to the free entertainment for the kids. Vendors ply the streets. All this brings an excitement to the air.

The University of the Philippines is known for being inhabited by all sorts of creatures like radical activists, baggy-trousered artists and the occasional students who actually study, but the freaks really come out of the woodwork during the last day of classes for the year. Costumed in anime characters, dancing monkeys and even the Lord of the Rings fellowship circle, they people the Academic Oval,

zed Newlist

New logos



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ROUND and round they go.

delighting and sometimes scaring the people there.

This year, the Lantern Parade was held on Dec. 17. The floats were varied. Examples: an oversized ping-pong table and a marching band playing the theme song from "Voltes V"

The participating organizations were also varied: the UP Underground Musicians Community (who had rock bands playing on a flatbed truck), Stand UP (the resident activist group), the student council (who protested the alleged diminishing education budget), and the UP Christian Community (who, I as-



MADAME Bola sees all.

sume, was pro-God).

The most awaited floats came from the College of Fine Arts. Their theme for this year was "perya." They had students dressed as side-show exhibits, such as a "manghuhula," a knife thrower and even a bearded lady (who was really a man). They also had a carousel with Christmas music from the Chipmunks, a haunted house on a hill and a

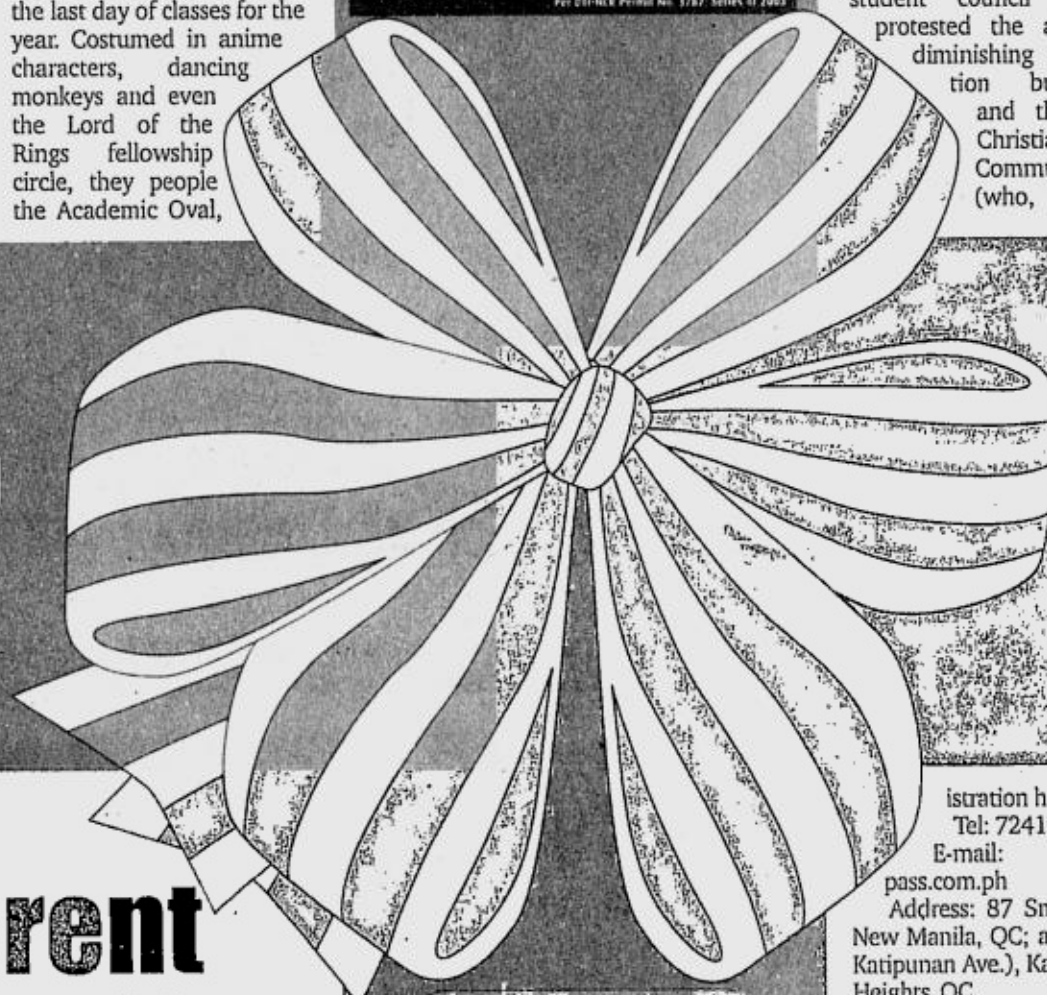
carnival-themed banner of Taiwanese sensations F4.

The procession ended at Quezon Hall where the awarding took place. The best lantern award went to the Asian

Institute of Tourism for its enormous pink octopus lantern. Awards were also given to the most creative, resourceful and dramatic creations, as well as to the float or lantern that best displayed teamwork.

But the prizes were only icing on the cake. The true reward in the parade was in the spirit of camaraderie and unity that enveloped the UP community.

No wrapping required.



Hey 2bU! readers!

MOST organizations give out receipts when you donate cash. Make sure to keep those receipts. 2bU! is cooking up a surprise for all you do-gooders out there!

A different kind of gift guide

By Maui V. Reyes
2bU! Correspondent

IF you've run out of gift ideas, grab one of Hands On Manila's donation cards, which go for P100 each. With every purchase, a donation will be made to Hands On Manila in the recipient's name.

The big bonus is the gift-giving guide which enumerates 100 worthy causes, from animal welfare to women's issues and heritage conservation. You can buy these donation cards at the Hands On Manila office (see sidebar).

Start spreading that Christmas cheer to those who really need it. Here's a few of our fave charities, according to "A Giving Guide to a Better Manila."

• The Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), which runs the Paws Animal Welfare Rehabilitation Center, a shelter for abandoned and rescued cats and dogs. It also functions as an animal adoption house, helping animals find new homes.

Beneficiaries: Abandoned, neglected and maltreated animals

Donations: Pet food, medications and medical supplies, blankets, old newspapers, disinfectants, collars, leashes, etc.

Contact person: Anna Cabrera, admin-



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istration head
Tel: 7241986 and 4721688
E-mail: paws-hq@compass.com.ph

Address: 87 Small Horseshoe Drive, New Manila, QC; and Aurora Blvd (near Katipunan Ave.), Katipunan Valley, Loyola Heights, QC

Website: www.picsropit.com/paws3
• The Asilo de San Vicente de Paul, a house for orphans and youths. It seeks to uplift the quality of life and well-being of poor and needy children and youth, developing them as responsible and loving citizens.

Beneficiaries: Youth/children
Donations: Home and kitchen equipment

Contact person: Sr. Mely Espinili, DC, executive director; and Cachie Dimalalan, social services head
Tels: 5233829, 5235206 or 5235264

• The Rhiphine Council of Cheshire Homes for the Aged, a private group that takes care of the incurably sick, abandoned, disabled and handicapped. It runs and manages homes that conduct income-generating activities for the patients, such as crafts and shoe repair.

Beneficiaries: Terminally sick and disabled individuals

Donations: Medicines, wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, canes, clothing, toiletries, sheets, pillows, and small appliances such as electric fans

Contact person: Gonzalo Goquiola, president; Sr. Valeriana Baerts, executive director
Tel: 7213620

E-mail: hwnsfpi@jbdnet.com
Address: Bahay Biyaya Cheshire Student Hostel, 48 Saint Michael St., Immaculate Conception, Cubao, QC.

• Sa Aldat Sisikat Foundation, which tries to build a nation of readers, with the support of local and foreign companies and local governments. It puts up reading corners in and donates children's books to

public schools.

Beneficiaries: Public schools, local governments

Donations: Books, office supplies and equipment

Contact person: Margarita Delgado, president
Tel: 8898135/8863888 local. 3523 or 3525

E-mail: sas@readerstransform.com

Address: 35/F Pateron Megaplaza 358 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City

Website: www.readerstransform.com

• The Heritage Conservation Society, which works for the protection and preservation of Philippine heritage sites, structures and cultural landmarks through educational and outreach programs, legal advocacy and sustainable development initiatives.

Beneficiaries: General public
Donations: Office equipment and supplies; several types of support are also available

Contact person: Gemma Cruz, executive director
Tel: 5212239

Address: G/F Museo Pambata Building, Roxas Blvd., South Drive, Ermita, Manila.

• The Women's Crisis Center, which works against forms of violence against women. It also seeks to empower women and make them more active participants in social transformation.

Beneficiaries: Women, youth/children and the elderly

Donations: Office supplies

Contact person: Ma. Salome C. Ujano, executive director
Tel: 9267744, 9249315 or 9225235

E-mail: wccmanila@pacific.net.ph
Address: 7/F East Avenue Medical Center, East Avenue, Diliman Hills, 0830 QC.

E-mail the author at volcanogirl28@yahoo.com



What is Hands On Manila?

IT'S a non-profit organization that provides volunteer programs which enable individuals to give their abilities, time or money to help contribute to the growth and deve-



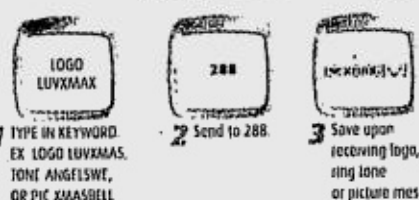
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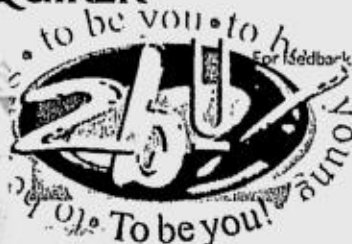
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Festive feasting

Nothing like preparing Christmas dinner with friends for that warm, marshmallow-merry feel

Story on page F3



Goodies for the holidays.



- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Mr. Suave
Parokya Ni Edgar
TONE MRSUAUE | 11 Unwell
Matchbox 20
TONE UNWELL |
| 2 Spaghetti Song
Sexbomb
TONE SPAG | 12 Awit Ng Kabataan
Rivermaya
TONE KABATAAN |
| 3 Happy
Rolling Stones
TONE HAPPY | 13 Get Busy
Sean Paul
TONE GETBUSY |
| 4 Where Is The Love
Black Eyed Peas
TONE WERISLUV | 14 From The Inside
Linkin Park
TONE FROMTHE |
| 5 Maybe
Enrique Iglesias
TONE MAYBE | 15 Mr. Suave Ver. 2
Parokya Ni Edgar
TONE MRSUAUE2 |
| 6 Perfect
True Faith
TONE PERFECT | 16 Broken Vow
Lara Fabian
TONE BROKEN |
| 7 I'll Be
Edwin McCain
TONE IBE | 17 Behind Blue Eyes
Limp Bizkit
TONE BEHINDB |
| 8 Hey Whatever
Westlife
TONE HEYWHAT | 18 Baby I'm in Love
Thalia
TONE BABYIM |
| 9 Kanlungan
Noel Cabangon
TONE KANLUNGAN | 19 Gold
Spandau Ballet
TONE GOLD |
| 10 Forever's Not Enough
Sarah Geranium
TONE AEVERSNOT | 20 I Wanna Be With You
Mandy Moore
TONE WANNABEW |

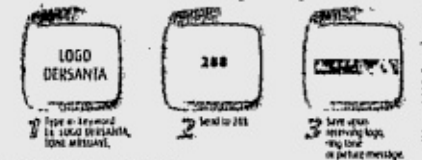


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Pa-futo pa-pasko



You can win a 2003 Ford Expedition or a P1 Million Shopping Spree!

Promo period is from November 23, 2003 to January 15, 2004. Draw date is on January 30, 2004.

PROMO MECHANICS:

- All qualified travelers pursuant to the existing laws (Regular Filipino Traveler, OFW, Balikbayan and Foreign Individual Traveler) may avail of the "Pa-Auto, Pa-Pasko!" promo. Promo is valid both in Duty Free Philippines Fiestamall and Duty Free Waterfront in Lahug Cebu.
- For every \$100 worth of purchase, a customer will be entitled to one (1) raffle coupon.
- Participating customers should present their DFP shopping card and receipts at the claim counter to get their computer printed raffle coupons, affix their signature and drop their entries at designated drop boxes located at Duty Free malls.
- A participant can only win once. Should his/her name be drawn more than once, he/she will get the bigger prize.
- Only entries received on or before January 15, 2004 shall be qualified.
- Raffle draw will be on January 30, 2004 at Duty Free Philippines Fiestamall, at 3:00 p.m.
- One Million Peso Shopping Spree is in the form of Gift Certificates.
- Prizes are tax paid and not convertible to cash. All purchases are subject to Customs rules and regulations. Customs duties and taxes for electronic purchases of non-Balikbayans and non-OFWs will be paid in cash and shouldered by the winner.
- Winners will be notified by registered mail and announced in leading national daily newspapers. Prizes may be claimed at Marketing Department, Duty Free Philippines Fiestamall upon presentation of valid IDs.
- Employees of Duty Free Philippines, PC&V and their relatives up to second degree of consanguinity or affinity shall not be allowed to join the promo.
- Prizes not redeemed within 60 days after notification will be forfeited upon approval of DFI.

The best things in life are duty-free.

Under RA 9174, Balikbayans and OFWs arriving between Nov.15 and Jan.15 can shop within 30 days from date of arrival.



VINTAGE floral coat with fur lining



CHASE the blues away with this very feminine jacket.



I'M DREAMING of a white... jacket.



BRONZE beauty



STYLISH squares



CHECKMATE



NEXT year's Halloween costume. This authentic Mannings jacket is all it takes to become a salesclerk of the popular Hong Kong chain.



PURPLE princess



FLOWER power



ELVIS will be proud. Don't step on my blue suede jacket.

FASHION FREAKS

Where can you buy these goodies for P20?

By Pam Pastor



THE SOLES are clean. You can find new footwear in ukay-ukay stalls if you know how to look.



MAROON MAVEN. Stride into the world in these lovely red boots.



BOOTS and other kinds of shoes go for P100-P400.

ONE Saturday night, as we queued up to watch "Elf," a close friend of the Fashion Freaks twirled around in a gorgeous new jacket.

"Guess how much?" he said, one perfectly arched eyebrow raised at us.

"One thousand?"

"Seven hundred?"

"Five hundred?"

But our radars were way off.

"Two hundred? No way!"

"No! Twenty pesos!" he said smugly, before throwing his head back in laughter.

Then he proceeded to make us pea-colored with envy by rattling off his great finds. A velour jacket, a trench, DKNY outerwear, an outfit he saw Madonna wearing in one of her videos.

We whined, we begged, we pleaded.

We needed directions, we needed a map.

A few days later, we found ourselves in a gold mine—Obo-ob's Ukay-Ukay's Kalentong branch.

There were shirts, jackets, coats, suits, skirts, pants, and even bags and boots. We checked the soles—some of them haven't even been used!

New arrivals cost between P40-P50. But every once in a while, they hold crazy sales where everything goes for P20 each.

And while the goods are great enough to keep you coming back, another thing that made the place stand out was the warmth of the girls manning the store.

"Kuya, nasaan yung asawa mo? Bakit hindi mo kasama ngayon?" one girl asked a pony-tailed man, apparently a regular customer. "Sabihin mo sa kanya nagagandahan ako sa kanya."

Another girl followed us around, making conversation as she pleasantly helped us get coats off the higher hooks.

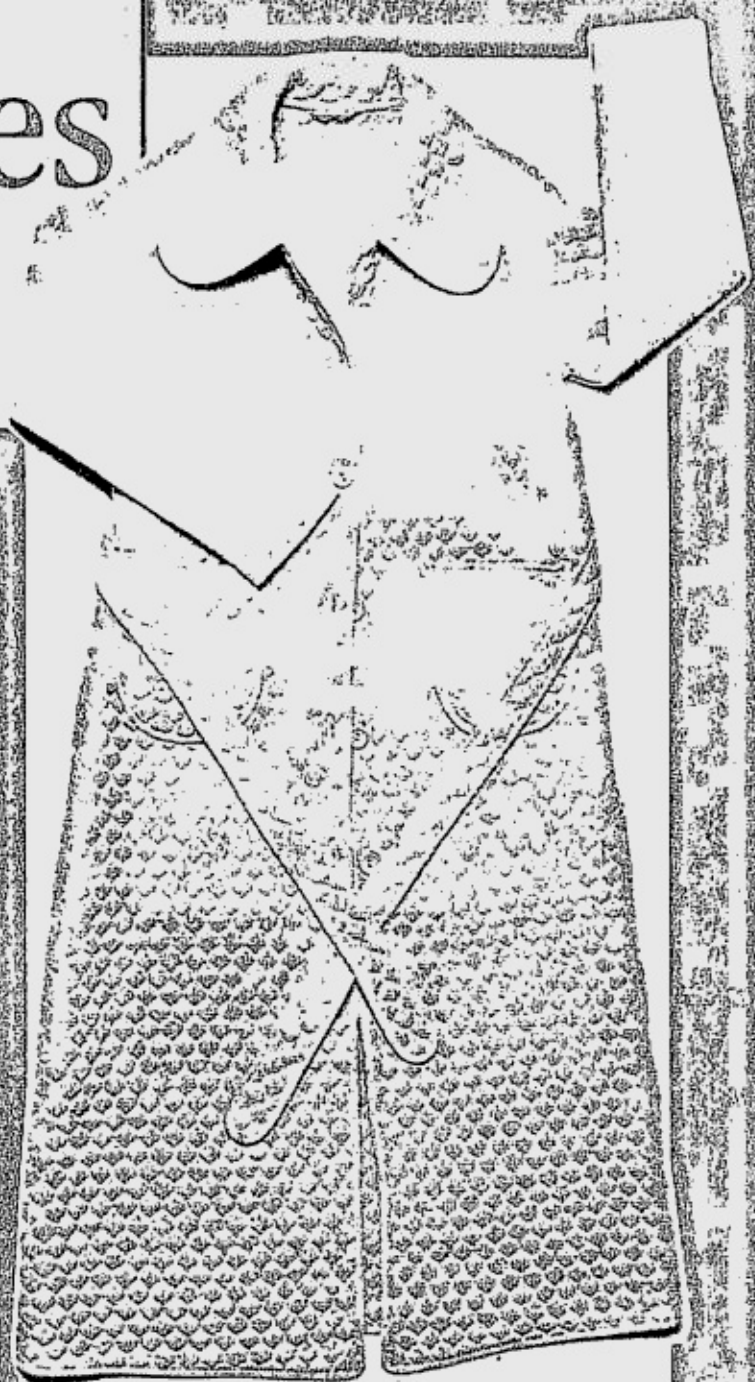
The warmth was contagious. Customers made small talk with one another as they went through the racks of clothes. A man encouraged the ladies to get their hair rebonded at his salon. A woman told us about her daughter who is also an ukay aficionado.

Before we left, the salesgirls exchanged numbers with us, promising to text when new goods come in.

It was a great night. We found lovely additions to our wardrobe, we made new friends, and I can proudly say that I bought this year's Christmas dress for only P40.

Obo-ob's has branches in 33 B. Morcella St., Pateros, Metro Manila; Signal Palengke in Taguig; Roosevelt in Muñoz, Quezon City; Gen. Kalentong in Mandaluyong (in front of Banco Filipino, near Jollibee); MacArthur Highway in Alabang, Pampanga (in front of Alabang Public Market); and San Fernando, Pampanga (in front of St. Anthony's Drugstore). Call Rudy at 0927-4142553, Mia at 0920-6504332 or Elvira at 0920-3871647.

Do you want the Fashion Freaks to visit your store or see your wares? E-mail us at thefashionfreaks@yahoo.com



THIS YELLOW coat will make even the coldest days seem sunny.

Here's our Christmas gift for you—an ukay-ukay fashion haven with nothing over P50 (except for the shoes)



THERE are sweaters of all shapes and sizes.



CHOCO-LICIOUS. This light blazer/trench can jazz up any outfit.



WE can picture this coat on Barbara Novak.



THIS SLIMMING black dress is a steal at P40.



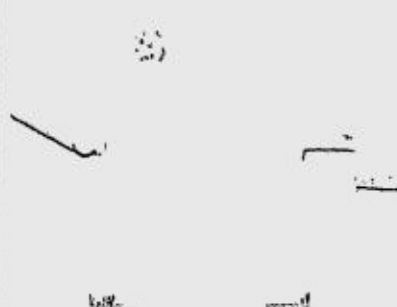
THE HOOD adds drama to this sheer black jacket.



STARS and stripes



BE THE KING of this urban jungle. Snakeskin print polo, P20



THIS heavy knitted sweater can double as a coat if you're petite.



THE TRUTH is, we still haven't figured out how to wear this top.



THE AFTERNOON before Christmas, four friends decide to make their own feast.



IT'S not easy, but someone's got to do it.



EVERYBODY, and we mean everybody, has to pitch in if he or she wants to eat.



WHO knew enjoying the fruits of one's labor could be this fun (or delicious)?



UM, don't tell anyone I forgot to put butter in the choco-mallow pie.



FOOD good enough for eating. Stop throwing it around, you guys!

Festive feasting

Text by Anne Rose Elicaño
Photos by Happy and Tammy David

Traditionally, everything about the Christmas feast—its enjoyment as well as its preparation—is meant to be shared with loved ones.

For this shoot, four friends try their hand at cooking Christmas dinner. Leaving the task to the professionals might have been easier, but that would mean missing out on the camaraderie, marshmallow fights and nibbling on unbaked cookie dough.

So after a full afternoon of carefully following instructions and battling with the batter, they are ready for the best part of it all... eating the Christmas feast.



IT'S all worth it in the end. This is Paolo with his seventh *bibingka*.



WHAT'S a Christmas feast without Yuletide carols on the piano?

SANTA'S BLUSH

10-12 Servings
1 1/4 bottle cranberry juice (about 4 cups)
1 750-ml bottle dry red wine
1 750-ml bottle soda water
1 cup whole cranberries, bottled or canned

- About eight hours before serving, chill all ingredients individually. Combine cranberry juice and wine in a large pitcher and stir until well mixed.
- Add the soda water just before serving then pour into wine goblets. If desired, garnish with bottled or canned cranberry fruit.

CHOCO-MALLOW PIE

8 servings
1 1/4 c crushed chocolate wafers
2 tbsp sugar
1/4 c melted butter
1 1/3 c semisweet chocolate chips
1 8-oz. pack cream cheese, softened
1/2 c chocolate syrup
2 1/2 c mini marshmallows
Chocolate curls for garnishing (optional)

- Preheat oven to 375 F. In a bowl mix together crushed wafers, sugar and butter. Press on the bottom and up the sides of a nine-inch pie plate. Bake in preheated oven for eight-10 minutes or until set. Cool completely on wire rack.
- In a small saucepan, heat 1/2 cup of the cream until bubbles form on the sides. Turn off the heat. Add chocolate chips and cover pan for about one minute. Stir mixture gently until smooth.
- In another pan sprinkle gelatin in water until gelatin granules swell and become spongy. Heat gently for about three minutes or until liquid is clear. Pour into chocolate cream mixture, stirring until smooth. Cool to room temperature.
- In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until soft and creamy. Gradually add chocolate syrup and continue beating until smooth. Blend in chocolate-cream-gelatin mixture. Fold in marshmallows. Spoon into prepared crust.
- Chill at least eight hours or overnight. If desired, garnish with whipping cream, marshmallows and chocolate curls before serving.



GIFTS, this time the inedible kind



STYLING: HAPPY DAVID
MODELS: JAMILA REYES, PAOLO TEODORO, MARISSA AND CARISSA CHAN
EXTRAS: ROWIE ELICANO AND TAMMY DAVID
CLOTHING: CELIO GREENBELT 3, KATE TORRALBA FOR ISHQ
ACCESSORIES: EARRINGS AND CLIPS FROM GET HAPPY AT ISHQ, ASTORIA PLAZA; NECKLACES BY CARISSA CHAN AT SIMPLE PLEASURES, GREENBELT 3
SPECIAL THANKS TO CHEL KATIGBAK FOR THE USE OF HER KITCHEN
CHRISTMAS RECIPES FROM FOOD MAGAZINE, AVAILABLE IN BOOKSTORES AND NEWSSTANDS NATIONWIDE



CHEERS to a perfect Christmas feast!



Remembrance of Christmases past

By Catherine Young
2bU! Correspondent

WHEN I was younger, my brother and I looked forward to fireworks on Christmas Eve. I remember watching the same Holiday cartoons like "The Grinch" and "Jeremy Creek," more for tradition rather entertainment.

I used to want trolls for Christmas and many of them are still in my closet, their rainbow hair now all tangled and in need of a wash. We had an eight-foot-tall white Christmas tree for 13 straight years. Bags of candy were hung there but they were almost gone before the big day. My mom used to wrap my gifts as my clumsy hands would make the presents lumpy.

At 12, I wanted to make my own tradition, so I read "Sweet Valley Twins: The Magic Christmas" every year. The story was about twin princes Adrian and Dorin who were made into a pair of harlequin dolls by a magic spell, handed down from generation to generation until they got into the hands of Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield.

My first exchange gift was in elementary school. I was excited by a three-inch purple pin shaped like a couple of quarter notes. I also remember years of being made to play Christmas songs on the piano, including really old ones even my parents never heard of.

Giving presents then was very different. I used to write down exactly what I was going to give my friends, like teddy bears and Polly Pockets. When I got gifts, I peeled off their wrappers very carefully for use the following year.

My most embarrassing Christmas moment was when I was about eight or nine years old. I still believed in Santa Claus then and I wanted his au-



ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT G. RODRIGUEZ

tograph. Being a business-minded kid—and gullible, too—at the time, I imagined his signature would be worth millions.

I wrote to Santa with my request. Imagine my disappointment when my mom explained to me on Christmas morning that Santa was in such a hurry he just popped in then out of the house.

I was red-faced at about 16 years old when I discovered my letter hidden in a dusty, forsaken drawer. It seemed so stupid then, but now, it's pretty funny.

I also wanted to take up skating when I was younger. Going to the ice shows of Araneta Center every December became a holiday tradition. The skating rink seemed so big and seeing cartoon characters "in person" was very exciting.

My favorite Christmas memories are my family's visits to my lolo on Christmas Day. He would prepare his trademark dishes that even my mom couldn't replicate. A photographer, he would videotape us while we ate.

Christmas is very different now. Fearful of burning down our house,

we no longer have fireworks. Fortunately, our house is on the highest point of our hilly subdivision, so we can watch other people's fireworks from a safer distance.

The cartoons have given way to Christmas specials. Our tall white Christmas tree has been replaced with a shorter green one that can be placed on a table. I wrap most of the family's presents now, thanks to hours of watching The Lifestyle Network where I learned a trick or two.

The exchange of gifts has become quite tedious. Now I usually go to bazaars for ideas on what to get my friends. It's much harder to recycle wrappers. Most people now just stick their gifts into paper bags.

The book tradition I have tried to keep, although I am in search of something I could read year after year. The story of two creepy-looking dolls turning into uptight boys gets less exciting every year.

Now that no one bugs me to play the piano, I am more willing to play. The ice shows are also a thing of the past, especially since mascot skaters now seem more like giant cardboard boxes and the skating rink, for some reason, looks smaller. Although I don't believe in Santa Claus anymore, I try to make sure my younger friends do. It is tradition, after all. And ever since my lolo passed away, there hasn't been any family member we could visit. Now, I do miss everything about him, not just the videocam and the food.

Christmas is quite different now, although that's not necessarily a bad thing. The ways of celebrating may have changed, but the reason for the celebration remains. My memories of a more colorful Christmas make me happy because they remind me that I had a great childhood.

E-mail the author at
cathy_young1@yahoo.com

2BU! SURVEY

What is your favorite Christmas memory?

Compiled by Catherine Young
2bU! Correspondent

DRINKING orange juice with Momo (priest's wine) with our lolo in Pangasinan.—Xsa, 19, University of the Philippines-Diliman

Spending a very warm Christmas with my boyfriend's family and relatives, too!—Grace Saria, 21, Ateneo de Manila University (AdMU)

My entire family on a feeding frenzy with a lechon. Only bones remained after an hour.—Kelvin, Jumbo 19, UP Diliman

Spending the holidays with the whole family in the US—a white Christmas at that.—Jorel, 20, UP Diliman

My siblings and I would gather in the living room and sing all the songs we could think of on Christmas Eve.—Kat, 21, AdMU

The best thing was having a lola named Santa. We called her Lola Santa Claus and she'd hand out gifts and throw coins for paagaw on Christmas morning. She wore a Santa Claus hat with blinking lights.—Sandrita, 27, college instructor/goddess

Going to midnight Mass with my lola, but we don't do it anymore. Her knees always hurt in the cold weather.—Sam Refran, 19, 2bU! Correspondent and UP Diliman student

When I was younger, my cousins and I would wait for midnight so we could open our presents. We would go nuts because it seemed to take forever.—Pam, 20, AdMU

Two Decembers ago, a dear friend called me up on Christmas afternoon saying he just told his family he was gay. I couldn't offer any sound advice except "Kaya mo yan." Anyway, after all the tears and explanations, his family lovingly accepted him. After that incident, we sort of became close confidantes and phone buddies. Then boom! Suddenly I realized that I was in love with him. But he didn't feel the same. We're still good friends, though (I think).—Hender, 20, UP Diliman

I spent my first white Christmas in Philadelphia two years ago. Actually, it snowed only on the night before we left for Manila, so I was able to enjoy it just for a few hours.—Cricket, 20, UP Diliman

My favorite Christmas memory was when our relatives were still in good terms, me falling in line with my cousins to receive money from our uncles and aunts. Sadly, that was eons

ago.—Teng, 20, student and television researcher

My favorite Christmas memory used to be one Christmas when my mother, for the first and last time, pretended there was a Santa Claus. My brothers and I saw through it quickly, of course—what's the probability that Santa would have the exact same handwriting as your mother? This was also the same Christmas when my father and I made a papier maché belen complete with an electric "bonfire."

My new favorite Christmas memory is from this year when our block's float was chosen as the finale for the College of Fine Arts lineup, and was therefore the finale in the UP Lantern Parade. The parade was the most exhausting six hours I've ever had. Thankfully, those hours and the three weeks of preparation were well-rewarded by the cheers of the crowd and the overwhelming support of our professors and families.—Corey Cruz, UP Diliman College of Fine Arts

A favorite Christmas memory would be telling my aunts and uncles exactly what I wanted for Christmas. There wasn't much of a surprise come Christmas Eve, but it was fun and exciting to get the gifts you wanted, from those who were willing to spend just for you.—Arlene Sy, 20, AdMU

Walking through Bel-field with the trees lit up and the cool breeze blowing. Shopping at Greenhills tiangge to buy He-Man stuff in the '80s. Hanging out on campus after caroling to view the Sacred Heart statue, which changes shape through the play of light and shadows.—Amity Tan

My favorite memory is our traditional family gathering every Christmas Eve where each family branch performs. We've had singing, dancing, playing an instrument—we even had a play! Afterwards, the performers line up to receive money from Santa Claus (our lolas!). It's a night of fun and laughter and of getting to know each other.—Chiara, 20, AdMU

Family reunion, celebrating my grandparents' diamond anniversary with all the members of the family present.—Angel Cruz, 20, UP Diliman

2000 was my last year in high school. Clarissa Ocampo had just come out. There was promise that truth would prevail. It was—and still is—bittersweet that it was up to the Filipino people to see to it that truth would come out in the end.—Dave, 20, UP Diliman

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